

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Application No: 220805/FUL

Address: The Atrium Health Club, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AY

Proposal: Installation of 4 padel courts, 4 canopies, and a single storey office building (Amended Description)

Case Officer: David Brett

Applicant: Mr P Mohring

Received on (valid from): 31/05/2022

Target Date: 16/08/2022, extension of time on decision agreed with agent from 26/07/2022

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The site forms part of the existing The Atrium Health Club's sports ground, which has several existing sports pitches, changing facilities and car parking. To the south of the site is a railway line and to the north the River Thames. Allotments are located to the northeast of the site. The neighbouring site to the west is an existing football pitch.

The site is location with the Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature Area and the site is within Flood Zones 2 and 3 as designated by the Environment Agency.

The proposal site is not within a Conservation Area or Listed.



Fig 1. Proposal Site. Photo taken by case officer on 29/06/2022

Proposal

This application seeks the 4 no. new synthetic floodlit padel courts with perimeter fencing/screening and a canopy. The padel courts are to be constructed upon the existing hard surface tennis courts.

Plans/Documents Considered

The following plans and documents have been supplied for this application:

- The Atrium Health Club - padel court Floodlighting Lighting Impact Study/Overspill Readings - 4420
- Block Plan - SIS-MUK2737-01 Rev A

- Existing Site Plan with Topographical - SIS-MUK2737-03
- Padel Court plans & Elevations - SIS-MUK2737-04
- Padel Court Canopy details - SIS-MUK2737-05
- Padel Court Canopy side view - SIS-MUK2737-06
- Padel Court Canopy end view - SIS-MUK2737-07
- Padel Court ring beam detail - SIS-MUK2737-08
- Location Plan - SIS-MUK2737-09
- ~~- Proposed floodlighting - HLS4420~~
- General Requirement of Padel Court Safety - Q/HQF 01S-2019
- Design and Access Statement - MUK2737-DAS Rev A
- Flood map for planning - MUK2737
- LTA Padel Court Data Sheet

Received on 31/05/2022

- Proposed floodlighting - HLS4420

Received on 19/07/2022

- Block Plan - SIS-MUK2737-01 Rev B
- ~~- Site Plan - SIS-MUK2737-02 Rev B~~
- Existing Site Plan with Topographical - SIS-MUK2737-03 Rev A
- Location Plan - SIS-MUK2737-09 Rev A

Received on 21/07/2022

- ~~- Site Plan - SIS-MUK2737-02 Rev C~~

Received on 05/08/2022

- ~~- Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment - JSL4563_770~~
- ~~- Tree Constraints Plan - JSL4563_700~~
- ~~- Tree Protection Plan - JSL4563_710~~
- ~~- Tree Survey Schedule - JSL4563_750~~
- ~~- Tree Works Schedule - JSL4563_751~~

Received on 09/08/2022

- Site Plan - SIS-MUK2737-02 Rev D
- Padel Court Office - SIS-MUK2737-10
- Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment - JSL4563_770 Rev A
- Tree Constraints Plan - JSL4563_700 Rev A
- Tree Protection Plan - JSL4563_710 Rev A
- Tree Survey Schedule - JSL4563_750 Rev A
- Tree Works Schedule - JSL4563_751 Rev A

Received on 10/08/2022

Relevant Planning History

111130/FUL - Construction of a synthetic hockey pitch including floodlights and fencing (re-submission of 10/00610/FUL) - Application Permitted on 14/04/2011

100779/FUL - Construction of a synthetic hockey pitch including floodlights and fencing - Application Withdrawn on 14/05/2010

010447/FUL - Construction of synthetic grass sports pitch with perimeter fencing and floodlighting. - Application Permitted on 14/01/2002

Consultees

Network Rail - Response received on 13/06/2022

- *Network Rail has no objection in principle to the above proposal.*

Sport England - Response received on 22/06/2022

- *I have consulted the Lawn Tennis Association and they have raised no objections.*
- *However I note looking at aerial photographs the court is used as an over flow car park. Sport England is highly unlikely to support any planning application which reduces the amount of playing field area for a future car parking application.*
- *Having assessed the application, Sport England is satisfied that the proposed development meets exception 5 of our playing fields policy.*
- *This being the case, Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to this application.*

Environment Agency - No response received.

Reading Borough Council, Environmental Protection - Response received on 22/06/2022

- No objection to the application.

Reading Borough Council, Ecology - Response received on 01/07/2022

- The floodlights show light spillage of 5 lux up to 20m from the pitches. This is quite a significant amount of light pollution and there are systems available that can reduce such spillage (e.g. through the use of hoods, cowls or alternative light fittings).
- As light pollution can have a significant and detrimental impact on wildlife (see https://www.ukri.org/news/led-streetlights-reduce-insect-populations-by-half/?fbclid=IwAR1C2Nt5v_qRGZ-wr5l_Uz-P9ZI0Q87N58y7XVY_VZz6i7NtA71si-tjd-l for example) and planning policy states that planning decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on nature conservation (NPPF paragraph 185) it is recommended that the applicant is asked to review their lighting scheme. To comply with this policy the applicant will need to demonstrate that any light spillage outside of the pitches has been kept to the minimum that is achievable.

Reading Borough Council, Ecology - Further response received on 27/07/2022 upon review of revised Floodlighting Plan

- The revised Proposed floodlighting plan (Hallday Lighting, 18/7/2022) shows that light spillage has been reduced around the edges of the padel courts. This is more acceptable and given the location of the padel courts surrounded by playing fields, and an existing floodlit playing facility, there are no objections to this application on ecological grounds.

Reading Borough Council, Natural Environment - Response received on 20/07/2022

- *I can't see that any supporting tree information has been provided, as was advised would be required and as the DAS indicates will be necessary. As such, and not unsurprisingly, the proposal is not currently acceptable in relation to trees as it fails to demonstrate no harm to trees contrary to EN14 and our adopted Tree Strategy.*
- *If the trees have been removed, then landscape principles, prior to a decision, are required as per the pre-app response.*

Reading Borough Council, Natural Environment - Further response received on 21/07/2022 upon review of arboricultural information

- No objections then, subject to standard condition requiring an Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan

Reading Borough Council, Natural Environment - Further response received on 10/08/2022 upon review of Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan

- *I note amendments to the AMS (Rev A) to make it consistent with the advised construction and this document is now acceptable.*

Reading Borough Council, Transport Development Control - Response received on 15/08/2022

- *There are no in principle objections to this given that the numbers of participants for the proposed use would be less than the existing court.*
- *Given that the proposal would result in a reduction in the maximum number of participants at the site there is no requirement for the proposal to include any additional car or cycle parking.*
- *In the circumstances there are no transport objections to the proposal.*

External Consultees

4, Fair Ground Caravans, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AX - No response received.

6, Fair Ground Caravans, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AX - No response received.

9, Fair Ground Caravans, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AX - No response received.

5, Fair Ground Caravans, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AX - No response received.

7, Fair Ground Caravans, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AX - No response received.

8, Fair Ground Caravans, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AX - No response received.

2, Fair Ground Caravans, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AX - No response received.

3, Fair Ground Caravans, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AX - No response received.

10, Fair Ground Caravans, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AX - No response received.

1, Fair Ground Caravans, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AX - No response received. 11, Fair Ground Caravans, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AX - No response received.

Scours Lane Allotments, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AY - No response received.

Prudential Ibis Sports Club, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AY - No response received.

Reading Town Football Club, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AY - No response received.

8A, Fair Ground Caravans, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6AX - No response received.

A site notice was displayed on Saturday 11th June 2022, expiring on Saturday 2nd July 2022. No further comments were received for this application.

Equality Act 2010

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for Reading relevant to the application site comprises the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted November 2019).

The 'National Planning Policy Framework' ('NPPF') 2021 states clearly that its content is to be a material consideration in the determination of applications. The 'NPPF' states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan according to their degree of consistency with the 'NPPF' (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the 'NPPF', the greater the weight that may be given).

Relevant Policies

The application has been assessed against the following policies:

National

National Planning Policy Framework 2021;
National Planning Policy Guidance 2014 onwards;

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3: Adaption to Climate Change
- CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- EN5: Protection of Significant Views With Heritage Interest
- EN13: Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
- EN18: Flooding and Drainage
- TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
- RL6: Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses
- OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities

Other documents

Sustainable Design & Construction SPD (2019)
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
Assessment of Significant Views with Heritage Interest (2018)

Appraisal

The main issues considered for this application are as follows:

- a) Principle of Development

- b) Design and Access
 - c) Significant Views and Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature Area
 - d) Safeguarding Amenity
 - e) Natural Environment and Ecology
 - f) Transport
 - g) Flooding
- a) Principle of Development

Paragraph 92 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) seeks that planning decisions should enable and support healthy life styles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs through provision of facilities and infrastructure, including sporting facilities. Paragraph 98 seeks that development provides access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity due to the importance of these for the health and well-being of communities.

In this instance, the site is part of a well-established sports club and currently used as tennis/basketball courts. The proposals would not involve any fundamental change of use of the land, which would remain in leisure/sports use. As the proposal is for provision of an alternative sporting facility there would be no overall loss of sports provision and no loss of a grass pitch/playing field.

Sport England have been consulted on this application, and have confirmed that there are no objections to the application, with the Lawn Tennis Association also raised no objections to the proposal within their response.

Therefore, the principle of the development proposed is acceptable, provided that the policy requirements of the Reading Borough Local Plan are satisfied. The development is considered to improve the overall offer and existing facilities at The Atrium Health Club.

b) Design & Access

Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires all development to be of high-quality design and maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the surrounding area. In this specific case, this concerns the following components:

- Layout
- Landscape
- Scale: height and massing; and
- Architectural detail and materials

The existing site consists of a hardstanding basketball and tennis court to the west of the main building at The Atrium Health Club. A perimeter fence surrounds the site, which has also been used as an overflow car park, as discussed when the proposals were subject to a pre-application enquiry. The surrounding area is considered verdant and largely open with the most significant nearby developments being the Reading City FC football ground to the west.

The proposed development seeks the installation of four padel tennis courts, each court would be covered by an open sided lightweight canopy. The proposed canopies have a maximum height of 8.5m, an eaves height of 6m, and width of 11.3m. The canopy has been revised from the design that was considered during the pre-application to be smaller in size and scale, with no side walls. This has resulted in a less visually dominating scheme than what was presented at pre-application stage. Additional fencing is proposed through the centre of the site and has been specified to match the existing perimeter fence.

When viewed from the nearby Thames Path (see fig 2) to the north of the proposal site, it is considered that the development would have minimal impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. Passers-by may be able to glimpse a view of the proposed canopies from the Thames Path, however, this is not considered harmful due to the presence of the larger main building at The Atrium Health Club. The colour of the canopy has been specified as being of a light colour, which would likely blend in to the skyline.



Fig 2. Annotated photograph of the proposal site taken from the Thames Path. Photo taken by case officer on 27/07/2022

The proposed single storey office building would be located to the west of the proposal site and would be largely screened by the existing tree and hedge line along the west of the proposal site. The office building is considered minor in size and scale with a maximum height of 2.3m. It is considered unlikely that the proposed office would harm the visual amenity of the surrounding area, and due to the size of the building proposed it would not be viewable from the Thames Path or from protected views as defined in Policy EN5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

The development is considered to be of an appropriate size, scale and layout, with the existing hardstanding basketball and tennis courts considered a suitable location for such a development. The layout of the proposed courts have been determined by their function, with suitable spacing provided between each court to allow for players to manoeuvre in and out of the courts during play. The most visually significant feature of the development would be the canopies, which are considered a necessary addition to ensure that the facility can be used all year round. The development is therefore considered in accordance with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

c) Significant Views and Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature Area

Policy EN13 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that; *“Planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character or appearance of a Major Landscape Feature. The following areas, as shown on the Proposals Map, are defined as Major Landscape Features:*

- *The Thames Valley;*”

Policy EN5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that; *“New development should not harm and where possible should make a positive contribution to views of acknowledged historical significance.*

The following views merit special protection:

1. View from Mcllroy Park towards Chazey Barn Farm, the Thames Meadow and the Chilterns escarpment”

Paragraph 1.1.10 of the Assessment of Significant Views with Heritage Interest (2018) refers to the main building at The Atrium Health Club as a detractor to the view as defined from Mcllroy Park towards Chazey Barn Farm, the Thames Meadow and the Chilterns escarpment: *“The ‘Rivers’ sports club building 3 storeys high with light coloured cladding and a light brick situated on the edge of the water meadows is an example of a detractor that protrudes into the view”* (see fig 3 and 4). No alterations are proposed to the main building at The Atrium Health Club, however, it is considered to necessary to bear the main building in mind when assessing the visual impact of the development and its relationship with the existing built environment.

Paragraph 1.1.11 of the ‘Assessment of Significant Views with Heritage Interest (2018)’ states that there is a potential risk that the view may be further harmed due to the removal of tree cover due to piecemeal development, and that any development will preferably be low rise and of appropriate non-reflective materials. The proposed canopy would be largely obscured from views from Mcllroy Park by the tree and hedge line to the west of the proposal site. The height of the tree and hedge line is 12.5m, this is taller than the proposed canopy which has a maximum height of 8.5m. The development is considered to be low-rise in height and would not detract from views of Chazey Barn Farm to the north of the proposal site.

It is considered that the proposed development would not detract from the significant heritage view or the Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature Area, due to the size, scale and appearance of the proposed development. Therefore, the proposed development is considered in accordance with Policies EN5 and EN13 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.



Fig 3. Annotated view analysis of the view from Mclroy Park (Assessment of Significant Views with Heritage Interest, 2018)



Fig 4. Annotated view analysis of the view from Mclroy Park (Assessment of Significant Views with Heritage Interest, 2018), zoomed in to emphasise The Atrium Health Club

d) Safeguarding Amenity

This proposal has also been assessed against Reading Borough Local Plan policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity, which states that proposals are acceptable where they will not

cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties with regard to various factors, including (amongst others):

- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of development
- Artificial lighting

The nearest dwellings to the proposal site are located 230m to the west, along Scours Lane. The development includes the provision of floodlighting to serve the proposed padel tennis courts. The existing tennis court and basketball facility are floodlit and there is a significant separation distance between the proposed development and the nearest dwellings, therefore, it is considered that there would not be harm to nearby residents as a result of artificial lighting. The impact of the artificial lighting on wildlife will be discussed in section “e” of this report.

It is considered that the development would not appear visually dominant or appear overbearing to nearby residents. This is due to the size and scale of the proposed development and its proximity to nearby residents.

The proposal was further considered against the criteria specified within Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan. The proposed development would not harm the amenity of the surrounding area in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

e) Natural Environment and Ecology

As per Policy EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan; *“Development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors through land, noise or light pollution; where it would result in no deterioration in, or ideally enhance, ground and surface water quality; and where adequate water resources, sewerage and wastewater treatment infrastructure will be in place to support the proposed development prior to occupation”*.

The applicant was advised to reduce the amount of light pollution and spillage resulting from the proposed floodlighting, as this would likely have a detrimental impact on nearby wildlife. The applicant has provided revised floodlighting which incorporates side and rear cowls to divert spillage and focus the lighting towards the padel tennis courts. The amended floodlighting plan and details have been reviewed by the Council’s Ecology consultant and it has been confirmed that due to the presence of existing floodlighting and the location of the proposed site there are no objections to the application on Ecology grounds. The development is therefore considered to accord with Policy EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

An arboricultural survey has been carried out by the applicant as advised by the Council’s Natural Environment Officer. The report confirms that all trees and vegetation are to be retained. There were concerns from the Natural Environment Officer as to the extent of any excavation works required to erect the padel tennis courts and canopies. The arboricultural impact assessment confirms that the construction of the concrete ring beam would not require excavation past the tennis court construction, and therefore would not interfere with any tree roots.

An Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) and Tree Protection Plan (TPP) have been provided by the applicant. This information has been reviewed by the Council’s Natural Environment Officer and is considered acceptable. The details provided within the AMS and TPP will be secured via condition to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved documents. The development is therefore considered in accordance with Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

f) Transport

Transport Development Control have confirmed that there are no Transport objections to the proposed development, as the proposed use would be less than the existing courts (basketball courts to padel tennis courts). As there is a reduction in the number of participants required for the new activity from basketball, there are no requirements to increase the on site parking provision. The development is therefore considered in accordance with Policies TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

g) Flooding

The site is located within Flood Zones 2 and 3a as designated by the Environment Agency and therefore Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage System) would apply. Land in Flood Zone 3 is defined by the Environment Agency as having a high-risk flooding.

The proposed padel tennis courts would be sited on existing hardstanding surface. The proposals would remain for outdoor sport, which is classified as 'water-compatible development' in the NPPG. The proposed single storey building, to be used for storage, would be classified as a 'less vulnerable' form of development. Given this, the proposals are unlikely to have an adverse effect on flood risk.

A brief statement has been provided by the applicant stating that the panel court construction will consist of a concrete ring beam within the surface of the new padel court, and that this will be synthetic carpet on a porous subbase. Any water that has not been absorbed will be stored in the sub-base for attenuation before discharging. Attenuation to be provided via the porous court construction and thus the outflow rate will be no greater than existing.

Given that the development is to take place upon existing hardstanding, the development is not considered to worsen the existing situation at the site or increase flood risk to the surrounding area. Therefore, the development is considered in accordance with Policy EN18 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Conclusion

The development has been assessed and the works are considered to be in accordance with the above relevant policies and planning permission can be granted.

Recommendation

GRANT

Conditions

TL1: Time Limit (Standard)

The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than three years from the date of this planning permission.

REASON: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) in order to prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

AP1: Approved Plans

The development hereby permitted shall ONLY be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

- Padel Court plans & Elevations - SIS-MUK2737-04
- Padel Court Canopy details - SIS-MUK2737-05
- Padel Court Canopy side view - SIS-MUK2737-06
- Padel Court Canopy end view - SIS-MUK2737-07
- Padel Court ring beam detail - SIS-MUK2737-08

Received on 31/05/2022

- Proposed floodlighting - HLS4420

Received on 19/07/2022

- Block Plan - SIS-MUK2737-01 Rev B
- Location Plan - SIS-MUK2737-09 Rev A

Received on 21/07/2022

- Site Plan - SIS-MUK2737-02 Rev D
- Padel Court Office - SIS-MUK2737-10

Received on 05/08/2022

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out and adhered to in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

M3: Materials (As Specified)

The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of this development shall be as specified on the plans and/or application forms unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and ensuring the new development responds positively to the local context and character in accordance with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

L7A: Arboricultural Method Statement (As Specified)

Protective measures, including fencing, ground protection, supervision and working procedures shall be carried out in accordance with the Arboricultural Report and Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan prepared by RPS Group Plc dated 10/08/2022. Any deviation from the works prescribed or methods agreed in the report will require prior written approval from the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In order to ensure that reasonable measures are taken to safeguard trees in the interests of local amenity and the enhancement of the development itself in accordance with Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Informatives

IF1: Positive and Proactive Working - approval

The Local Planning Authority has worked positively and proactively with the applicant to resolve relevant matters to allow permission to be granted within the agreed timescale for the decision to be issued.

IF5: Terms

Your attention is drawn to the terms and conditions of this permission. Any development which is carried out but which differs materially from the approved plans and details, or does not comply with any condition(s) or planning obligation(s) attached to the permission may result in the Council taking action to remedy the breach of planning control. If you are in any doubt please contact the Council.

IF6: Building Control

Your attention is drawn to the possible requirement for submission of a Building Regulations application for the proposed development. Please contact Building Control on 0118 937 2449 for advice.

IF7: Complaints about construction

Complaints are commonly received about noise and dust caused by construction and demolition works, particularly working outside reasonable hours and smoke from bonfires associated with the burning of waste on site. The developer is reminded that construction and demolition associated with the approved development will be subject to environmental health law.

Encroachment

During the course of construction, the developer should take care to ensure that no part of this development (foundations, eaves, guttering, etc.) would encroach on, under or across the boundary line with the adjoining property, as the requisite Notice has not been served on the owner of that property. This permission does not confer any right of access onto land that is not under the developer's control. The developer should also be mindful of the obligations and requirements of the Party Wall Act (1996) details of which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/party-wall-etc-act-1996-guidance>

I23: Advice to adhere to approved Arboricultural Methods Statement

You are advised that only tree works included within the approved Tree Survey/Arboricultural Method Statement are approved by virtue of this consent. Any other works to trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order or to Conservation Area status will require submission of a tree works application or Section 211 Notice respectively.