

# Briefing paper

## An update on progress with the installation of Padel Tennis Courts in Beacon park.



Lichfield  
District Council

**For:** Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 3 April 2024

### Key facts

To provide Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on progress with the installation of the Padel Tennis courts in Beacon Park.

The original decision to install padel tennis courts was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 February 2023 and Council agreed to proceed with the project on 28 February 2023.

As part of this progress update a Member of O&S Committee had asked several questions for which they were seeking assurance:

1. What are the projections for the future demand for the sport?
2. Is 3 the right number of courts?
3. What will be the ongoing maintenance costs, and will these be covered by users' fees?
4. Has the new leisure centre been considered as a location? There is the land there and there will be toilet and changing facilities already in place and so there will be no need to build an additional facility building.
5. Was there proper consultation e.g. I understand that Friends of Lichfield Historic Parks have not been consulted. This body's purpose is "To be the main forum for consultation between Lichfield District Council and park users, volunteers, friends and local residents, through which all these can be involved in decisions made about the parks."
6. Has alternative funding been explored e.g. Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and other sports bodies?

### Background

- The original application has been withdrawn. A new site has been identified and all drawings, surveys, reports and assessments are due to take place in the coming fortnight. All of these documents will be uploaded to the planning portal once finalised.

Tenders:

- The tender packs have been prepared and are ready to go live.

Timelines:

- Subject to planning, the contractor recommends allowing a 12-week period for construction, which is weather dependent.

**Answers to Member questions are as follows:**

1. What are the projections for the future demand in sport?
  - Since 2019 the LTA (national governing body for both tennis and padel) have invested £5mil in to padel infrastructure and development.
  - In dec 2023, data recorded showed a 600% growth of padel courts in the UK.

- Over 200 national competitions took place in 2023. In 2024, world padel championships are due to take place.
- Since 2019, the number of UK padel companies registered each year has risen by 1771%.
- Sales of Padel equipment increased by 128% from 2022 to 2023.
- Global padel market was worth \$231 million USD in 2022 and will reach \$480 USD by 2028, Europe occupy circa 70% of that market.
- 'We are Padel' are currently the biggest operator locally at an 11-court venue in Derby. They say "the roadmap for 2023 - 2026 will see us doubling the expansion year on year". They are currently at 70 - 80% utilisation of their courts. To note, 60% utilisation of our facility would mean LDC receive an income of circa £70k annually.
- The LTA say "Our focus for 2024 – 2026 includes attracting, growing and diversifying the tennis and padel workforce to create more opportunities to play and compete.
- The LTA say "Our focus for 2024 – 2026 includes implementing the facilities strategy with a focus on parks, covered courts, community indoor tennis centres and Padel.

## 2. Is 3 the right number of courts?

- Yes, any less doesn't allow for the hosting of anything other than social competitions. 3 courts allows us to host LTA graded tournaments, attracting visitors to our city from across the midlands.
- There currently isn't a schools padel championship, included in our long term business plan is to host this championship, the first in the UK.

## 3. What will be the ongoing maintenance costs, and will these be covered by users' fees?

- All maintenance costs will be covered by users' fees. The Council will gain additional income, above and beyond maintenance costs.
- Maintenance costs for the facility will be circa £12k a year which covers the cleaning, energy usage, security and booking software.

## 4. Has the new leisure centre been considered as a location? There is land there and there will be toilet and changing facilities already in place and so there will be no need to build an additional facility building.

- Town centres across the country are undeniably facing a period of decline and struggle. Introducing a new facility that will attract both visitors and local residents is a step in the right direction. This will mean a positive economic impact beyond the immediate vicinity of the new facility, as well as improved health across our district.
- The park location was chosen so that the vast amounts of park users can access the facility, they don't have to overcome the initial barrier of going to a leisure centre for exercise. The visibility of this facility means we are much more likely to convert the 38% of inactive people in our district.

## 5. Was there proper consultation e.g. I understand that Friends of Lichfield Historic Parks have not been consulted. This body's purpose is "To be the main forum for consultation between Lichfield District Council and park users, volunteers, friends and local residents, through which all these can be involved in decisions made about the parks."

- The Sport, Leisure and Culture Consultancy (SLC) we're commissioned by the Council in November 2022 to consider golf and tennis options for the council.
- See attached appendix 'Survey Data'

## 6. Has alternative funding been explored e.g. LTA and other sports bodies

- The LTA offer a quick access interest free loan scheme for amounts of up to £250k.
  - There is the option to finance the purchase of the courts with a padel court provider.
  - Partner with external padel operators outside of the LTA seeking opportunities throughout Great Britain
- All options require some form of security against a loan and/or paying interest on financial borrowing. LDC already have the funds available. Given that a significant proportion of the income is retained by LDC, it gives the opportunity/choice as to whether to expand padel and/or alternative leisure offerings in the future.

## Future actions

- Planning application & decision in place
- Liaison with the council & contractor on access/logistics/paperwork around the site with appropriate personnel, including H & S teams.
- Contractors start on site.

## Risks

**Construction delays** – mitigated by building in the drier months of the year and using a contractor who builds courts across the country for the LTA. Risk is low.

**Quality control** – ensuring the quality of construction is vital to longevity. By using the chosen contractor, poor workmanship, the use of substandard materials, maintenance issues are eliminated. Contractor has all the correct licenses and accreditations to ensure quality. Risk is low.

**Competition** – the nearest facilities are in Derby (11 courts) and Sutton Coldfield (1 court). There are over 100,000 people within a 20-minute driving distance of the proposed location. Risk is low.

**Seasonal factors** – weather conditions. This has been accounted for in the business plan with 300 days of usage being estimated. This is based on 40+ years of experience in operating outdoor sports facilities locally. Risk is low.

## Key benefits and outcomes

The Beacon Park location was chosen so that the vast amounts of park users can access the facility, they don't have to overcome the initial barrier of going to a leisure centre for exercise. The visibility of this facility means we are much more likely to convert the 38% of inactive people in our district.

For more information contact:

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Appendix A – Survey data