

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Tabitha Kaye.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
26/00008/FP	Installation of two padel courts (amended scheme 05.03.26).	Little Wymondley Recreation Ground Tower Close Little Wymondley Hertfordshire

Submitted Plan Nos

Location Plan, Rev B Block Plan, Rev B P1 Proposed Paddle Court 1 and 2, Rev B P2 Proposed Elevations, Rev B

SECN12	Achieving well-designed places
SECN14	Meeting climate change,coastal,flooding
SECN15	Conserve + enhance natural environment
CGB5	Urban Open Land
SP1	Sustainable development in North Herts
SP10	Healthy Communities
SP9	Design and Sustainability
D1	Sustainable design
D3	Protecting living conditions
NE4	Biodiversity and geological sites
T2	Parking

2.0 **Site History**

- 2.1 15/00623/1: Erection of single storey Sports Pavilion. Conditional Permission (07/05/2015).
- 2.2 14/00507/1: Erection of single storey Sports Pavilion. Conditional Permission (28/05/2014).
- 2.3 91/01218/1: Siting of portakabin adjoining pavilion for use as Youth Centre. Conditional Permission (05/12/1991).
- 2.4 83/01353/1: Erection of detached building for equipment store and changing room. Conditional permission (19/08/1983).

3.0 **Representations**

- 3.2 **Little Wymondley Parish Council** – no comments received.

- 3.3 **Environmental Health** – No objection (subject to condition on lighting).

All references to lighting have since been removed from the submitted plans and will not be considered under this application.

- 3.4 **Ecology** – No objection (subject to lighting being removed and condition securing off-site BNG).

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 The application site accommodates the Little Wymondley Recreation Grounds, which includes a car park, playing field, tennis courts, basketball court, equipment store and

sports pavillion. The site immediately borders countryside to the north, west, and east, and the Wymondley Bypass to the south. Local Plan allocation WY1 immediately borders the site to the north. The proposed siting of the padel courts would be parallel with the north boundary, which is treated by sparse vegetation and an approx. 1m high post and wire fence.

- 4.1.2 Little Wymondley Recreation Ground is located within the Little Wymondley settlement boundary, and is designated by the North Herts Local Plan (NHLP) as 'Urban Open Land'. The Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) designates the site (named as Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields) as a 'Local Green Space' within the Parish.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Installation of two padel courts.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The key issues for consideration are as follows:

- The acceptability of the proposal in principle;
- The acceptability of the design of the proposed development and its impact on the character and appearance of the area;
- The impact of the proposed development on the living conditions of neighbouring properties;
- Highways and parking matters;
- The impact of the proposed development on the environment;
- Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) matters.

Principle of Development

- 4.3.2 The site is located within the settlement boundary of Little Wymondley, where development is acceptable in principle.
- 4.3.3 Policy CGB5 of the NHLP states outdoor sport facilities are appropriate development within Urban Open Land, which is commensurate with the provision of 2no. padel courts. Policy GIS1 of the WNP states that development will not be permitted within designated

Local Green Spaces unless 'special circumstances' apply. In this circumstance, the Recreation Ground was designated to protect the function of the site for public recreation. Therefore, it is considered that the provision of padel courts would accord with the requirements of Policy GIS1.

- 4.3.4 Furthermore, Policy SP10 of the NHLP outlines the Council's commitment to supporting healthy communities through the provision of sports facilities. Support for development which promotes community wellbeing is supported in principle by Section 15 of the WNP.
- 4.3.5 On balance, it is considered that the provision of 2no. padel courts within the settlement boundary of Little Wymondley is acceptable in principle.

Design

- 4.3.6 Policy D1 of the Local Plan requires that development proposals respond positively to the site's local context, which is consistent with paragraph 135 of the NPPF.
- 4.3.7 Policy NHE10 of the WNP outlines the need for development proposals to preserve the rural character of the village. Paragraph 187 of NPPF states the importance of conserving the intrinsic character of surrounding countryside.
- 4.3.8 The two padel courts would have a cumulative floor area of 659 sqm and would be enclosed by a black powder coated steel mesh fence of 2m in height. The padel courts themselves follow a standard design, each measuring 20m in length and 10m in depth, to include a toughened glass surround measuring a minimum of 3m, and a maximum of 4m, in height. The two courts would be removed from the northern boundary by 7m.
- 4.3.9 While the site is not located directly within the countryside itself, the proposed padel courts would be visible from the neighbouring countryside on account of the existing boundary treatments. However, the scale and design of the courts are consistent with the existing sport facilities on-site and therefore befit the character of the site. The use of materials such as toughened glass and mesh fencing would reduce the visual impact of the courts when viewed from a distance. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the character of the wider site or surrounding countryside.
- 4.3.10 Thus, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy D1 of the Local Plan, as well as paragraphs 135 and 187 of the NPPF.

Impact on Neighbours

- 4.3.11 Policy D3 of the NHLP states that permission will be granted for development which does not cause unacceptable harm to the living conditions of neighbouring sites. Paragraph 135 of the NPPF supports sustaining high standards of amenity.
- 4.3.12 The Recreation Grounds are publicly accessible 24/7. Notwithstanding this, the Recreation Grounds are within relative proximity to residential area Tower Close. Therefore, opening hours will be secured by condition to minimise noise disturbance to Tower Close. Lighting has been removed from this application and therefore will not be considered. Thus, the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on existing residential amenity in accordance with Policy D3 of the Local Plan and paragraph 135 of the NPPF.

Highways and Parking:

- 4.3.13 Policy T2 of the NHLP and Policy HOD3 of the WNP require proposals to accord with adopted parking standards.
- 4.3.14 The Recreational Ground benefits from a large parking area to the north of the site and is located within a sustainable location within the context of Little Wymondley. Therefore, the proposal is considered to accord with the requirements of Policies T2 and HOD3.

Environmental Implications

- 4.3.14 The proposed development would be consistent with the criteria set out in Policy D1 of the NHLP '*Sustainable Design*'. There are no other significant environmental implications as a result of the proposed development.

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):

- 4.3.15 Policy NE4 of the NHLP and Policy NHE2 of the WNP state that proposals should deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity. As identified by the NHC Ecology Officer, the submitted Small Sites Metric identifies a net biodiversity loss of 88%. As such, the mandatory 10% net gain requirement will be secured via condition.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 In the absence of material planning reasons to the contrary it is my view that planning permission is **GRANTED**.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

- 4.5.1 None.

4.6 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

- 4.6.1 Biodiversity Net Gain.

5.0 **Recommendation**

- 5.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED**, subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

3. The padel courts hereby approved shall only take place between the hours of 6.00am and 11.00pm on Mondays to Sundays, including public holidays.

Reason: Restriction of activity is necessary to ensure that the residents of Tower Close can continue to expect to enjoy times of reasonable peace and quiet and to comply with Policy D3 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

Biodiversity Net Gain

1. The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition "(the biodiversity gain condition)" that development may not begin unless:
 - (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
 - (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be North Hertfordshire District Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>).

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because none of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted proactively through positive engagement with the applicant during the determination process which led to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed  Anne McDonald Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 10 March 2026	