



**Padel and Pickleball Hub Working Group
Wednesday 24th July 2024 – Fountain Room
2pm – 4pm**

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| Present: | Marc Newey Nick Bunn Joy Stevens Andrew Wakely Lorna Bhasin Nick Yates Tim Freeman | Chief Executive Health Club Committee Chair Board Director-Family Forum Chair Tennis Committee Chair Tennis Committee Tennis Committee- Padel Rep Trevor May Contractors |
| In Attendance: | Carolyn Ward Louis Laville Dan Lott Stuart Reeks Simon Baker Paul Lindsey | Executive PA (minutes) Golf and Games Manager (Pickleball) Racquets Director Health Club Manager General Manager Racquets Manager |
| By Zoom: | Michael Hill (Board Chairman), Charlotte Codd and Helen Kent (LUC) | |
| Apologies: | Fred Warneryd and Colin Hector | |

1) Welcome

Marc introduced Helen and Charlotte from LUC and explained that they have been working with Roehampton Club in getting planning permissions for various projects, recently the fence on the 14th hole. Originally the application was refused and to get this across the line the Club had to agree to numerous conditions before work can start. All future schemes will be as onerous.

MN informed the working group that they have three schemes they are currently working on, IGC and the 1st tee Safety fencing, permissions for extension of the Bar Terrace and the Padel and Pickleball Hub (PPH) with current plans of locating this on the existing grass courts.

MN gave some background on the PPH pre-application and remarked that a pre-application visit by Wandsworth Council is only the first stage of approval. You can bypass this stage, but you have better chance of applications being approved if you first meet with planning officers who advise on what things they are onboard with and likely to be approved. They now have a new planning officer as the last one has been promoted and moved on. Unfortunately, the current officer is very strict on rules and at first when we met him, he didn't seem too sports friendly.

Proposed application was for 5 Padel and 6 Pickleball courts, fitted in the space currently occupied by the 4 grass courts 25-28.

MN explained that some members think that we have jumped ahead with this plan, but the ideas were run by the Tennis Committee, an Open Forum was carried out and there was a Member survey in 2023. Members didn't know when they completed the survey that the PPH would be on grass courts 25-28. The Board has agreed there will be a further full member survey which will then give a mandate to start work on this project. In the meantime, a working group has been put together to look at this proposal carefully.

We had looked at alternative places but was told by the previous planning officer that they could not put padel courts near Fairacres and he wasn't keen for the Padel to be located at courts 4 – 6, next to the ITC which already have floodlights. Now there is a new planning officer this proposition could be put forward again and shouldn't be ruled out.

The grass courts 25 – 28 had been proposed as they are only used 6 months of the year in the Summer and only then when it is dry. They would need to apply for floodlights but as there are floodlights at Rosslyn Park this shouldn't be a problem. Pickleball is very noisy but again this shouldn't be a problem as the houses opposite on Roehampton Lane has a red route in between where there is already heavy traffic noise. The only obstacle seems to be getting permission for a roof.

MN pointed out that the new development would also give extra space for the Health Club who would like to extend the pool and sunbathing area and there would potentially be space for a play area that the Family Forum have asked for.

Individuals from the group introduced themselves and confirmed what Committees they were representing.

2) Scheme as discussed with WBC

The scheme drawings were shared on screen by LUC.

The pre-application was submitted to the Council asking for dedicated padel tennis and pickleball courts on the existing grass tennis courts located in the north-east corner of the club's premises. Key thing that was asked, how they feel about the roof structure which would cover three of the courts by using two small canopy roof structures spanning 21 metres.

In the application it was also proposed that an eight-metre strip would be retained in order to provide flexibility for any extensions to the pool area.

3) Feedback from WBC

Wandsworth Council came back with a written response and highlighted that the site is designated as Metropolitan Open Lane (MOL) and part of the site is within a Designated Linear View.

It was noted that the biggest objection was the roof, but the scheme still had some merit. A reduction in scale maybe required (less courts) and without a roof but lighting would be fundamental for padel.

The Club is trying to respect the open land policy and would happily reinforce the tree line and had spoken to the planning officer about putting more trees in.

MH said that the planning officer had been quite negative at the beginning but was more onboard by the end of the meeting.

Charlotte explained that the Council has responded that the proposed development would involve the formation of large areas of hardstanding to form the courts, which represent encroachment into MOL, which would by definition cause harm to openness. The proposed fencing surrounding the courts would cause further visual harm to MOL openness by reducing the open aspect of the site. The proposed canopy structures would be substantial, significantly reducing the open character of this part of the site, and visible from a number of vantage points.

MN thought we could lobby for VSC (very special circumstances) as they have a special relationship with the local Paddock School who use the facilities at the Club.

LUC was asked what openness was and it was explained that it is about the absence of development, any structure or building, strategic area of land.

It was noted that the proposed canopies were not seen as temporary structures by the Council as they are bolted down. The Club are looking to get an outside gym, and this will need to be above ground to get planning permission.

MN feels that we won't be able to persuade the Council to approve a roof over the PPH on Courts 25-28.

4) Thoughts and proposals of new Scheme

MN asked members what they felt should be in the area of courts 25 – 28.

NB – Stated that as Health Club users, if they are given more space they would use it, agrees that there should be more family provision, more swimming area and outdoor exercise areas. Thinks the location of the PPH is important but doesn't think there is a noise argument as kids make noise in that area constantly.

It was noted that noised dampening sheets/panels could be installed around the courts if required but wouldn't be soundproof.

Action JUL24/01: TF to look into Acoustic Panels.

AW – Thought pickleball will free up more tennis courts and agreed that padel is growing.

LL – Confirmed that Pickleball continues to grow quickly over last 2 years and sessions are full. 260 members on the mailing list. People want to play more than once a week.

NY – Asked why we don't paint 4 pickleball courts on court 14 and if demand is high then paint them on court 13. Members do not want to be next to people playing pickle or being coached. Would like to see a cold-water plunge pool also.

JS – Would like a play area and a kids swimming pool, also a kiosk or social space and a vending machine.

LB – Didn't think 8 metres extension was a lot of space and the extension of the pool area was so important. Wondered if Courts 4 – 6 could be looked again for the proposal, actively investigate the possibility now there is a change of planning officer. Could extend the Health Club / play area over court 25, court 26 and 27 to be all weather surface and keep court 28 as grass.

MN thought LB's ideas could tick a lot of boxes and showed the latest Masterplan 2035 where they had looked at alternative locations for the Padel courts and also said that the planners did not want anything south of the walkway to the 10th tee/ITC.

Action JUL24/02: MN/TF/DL to relook at Courts 4 – 6 and propose a scheme on those three courts and how taking out the three clay courts would affect the tennis operation.

DL – Stated that they would need to replace grass courts with an all-weather surface at peak times as they cannot operate without all year weather courts. They could fit 3 pickle and 4 padel in the area of courts 4 – 6, as they have permanent and seasonal buildings, argument for them should be less of an obstacle. Asked if court 11 was a no-go area or look at courts 12, 13 or 14.

AW – Could use the guest carpark for pickleball and put a roof on it, send people to Rosslyn Park.

PL – Asked if we needed 4 padel courts, if they were located on the grass courts could they not have a bubble which would only be there October – March and would be open land in the Summer.

TF – Advised if you create a bigger space, you will have to declare what you want that space for, if you are proposing a venture play area for example.

SR – Would like to see an expansion of the seating area, future proofing that area would be good. They can only have 56 people in the pool at one time. A toddler's pool would free up space for more adult swimming. North of Courts 25-28 would be great for a children's area.

MH – Informed the group that financially we are not being constrained, there will be a phasing and can justify a return. The Health Club makes us different to other Clubs and can see the logic of expanding that another 10 or 12 metres eastwards. Believes that Padel and Pickle are going to continue to grow. Does not think that Padel and Pickle need to be together. Would need another 4 Padel courts as a minimum. Would not put Pickle on Court 11 as too close to Woking Close housing but Courts 13 and 14 would work. Think that has merit and as a member highly attractive. We have a diverse range of views, very few people are against expanding the Health Club and thinks that Padel and Pickle would also be well supported. Only a small group of people are against developing the Grass Courts 25 - 28. Need to think how we enhance the grass provision and having a grass court on Croquet lawn 4 would be a good compromise. Down to the planners to just put down Padel and move Pickle to show a smaller structure.

TF – Informed the group that you can get 5 Padel courts on Courts 4-6 if you do not mix with Pickleball. As this links with the ITC, agrees with MN this would have a better chance of success.

JS – Asked if Pickle could go in the Squash Courts, it was noted that this would not be an option.

Summary

- Look at courts 4 – 6 with a roof and lighting as a Hub for 5 Padel Courts.
- Paint pickleball courts on Court 14 and expand to 13 if getting popular.
- See if the Grass Courts (26 – 28) could house four all weather courts.
- Allow Health Club expansion to cover Court 25.
- Question getting lights for Courts 26 – 28
- Look where a children's playground area with activities could go north of courts 25-28.

MN asked where is the best place for Pickleball to go if being separated from Padel?

It was noted that Courts 19 – 21 need to remain grass and Pickleball cannot be played on Court 11 as too close to the houses. Netting might be an option to separate the Courts.

DL – Stated that a lot of people pay for coaching, and they will not play next to Pickleball or play on courts with lines.

MN asked why we cannot put permanent markings on court 1?

AW asked about the Lime Tree lawn area and if that could be changed to Pickleball Courts? Change the current Padel courts to Pickleball Courts, MH thought that would be too noisy. It was noted that Fairacres have already contacted the Council about the noise.

JS – Commented that there are only so many facilities that you can have at the Club. It was noted that Court 2 should be more patient with Court 1.

TF – Has been asked about a curtain which will reduce the noise and there is some scope for that.

Action JUL24/03: TF to explore this further.

MN asked if there were any final thoughts.

LB – Revisit having Padel on Courts 4 – 6.

JS – Family Forum have been asking for Court 11 to be used as a multi surface for netball. Give pickleball 2 courts, one fully indoor and one seasonal. Be clear about times when you can play.

MN – Will look to see what lines we can put on Court 11 and Family Forum can have the Lime Tree area, but games must be played with a softball.

NY – If our pickleball players are not playing that what are they playing, it was noted that it was a mix of tennis and golf.

MN – Commented that pickleball was such a social sport and a racket sport that many golfers want to play. Hence the noise levels because people are enjoying themselves as well as the noise from the padel bats. At this stage Pickleball is behind Padel. MN put forward the suggestion of having two courts painted up on Court 14 to allow play in the winter when Airhall 1 is up.

NB – Other Sports members could have the chance to pay more to play Pickle and Padel. Pay an extra fee for that, as long as they do not play on the Tennis Courts. is this possible? MN said Membership Committee can consider this.

Action JUL24/04: MN to take to Membership Committee.

PL – Thinks it would be better to paint pickleball lines on Court 2 and 3 rather than Court 1.

DL – Didn't think a much bigger space was needed to sit outside the pool if pool not extended.

SR – Happy with the proposal of having Padel on Courts 4 – 6.

SB – Same as SR but would like moveable floor on any new pool at the Health Club so toddlers' lessons and hydro spin can be accommodated.

5) Conclusions

MN asked LUC if they had felt that the meeting had been productive.

Helen commented that it was good to hear the debate and understand all the views from the different groups.

Thought it was worth asking the question again with WBC about Courts 4 – 6 and about getting a roof there.

TF will feed through what he thinks will work or not on courts 4-6.

Post meeting reflection and request from MH

To assess the option where we locate 3 or 4 non floodlit all weather courts (probably smash) over on courts 19-21?

- Done in conjunction with having the Padel Hub on current smash courts 3 to 6.
- In the summer they can be used all day, and in winter during the day hours for coaching and kids, and general play – would leave the 10 indoor courts and 4 existing smash for Winter evening use.
- Potentially allow us to keep the “best” grass courts (I would still sacrifice court 25 to help the health club) and still convert Croquet lawn 4 to 1 or 2 grass courts.
- May be slightly easier from a planning perspective?

6) Date of next meeting

The working group decided that the next meeting should be towards the end of September, on a Wednesday afternoon from 1pm – 3pm.

Action JUL24/05: CW to do a Doodle Poll and send out a Calendar Invite.