

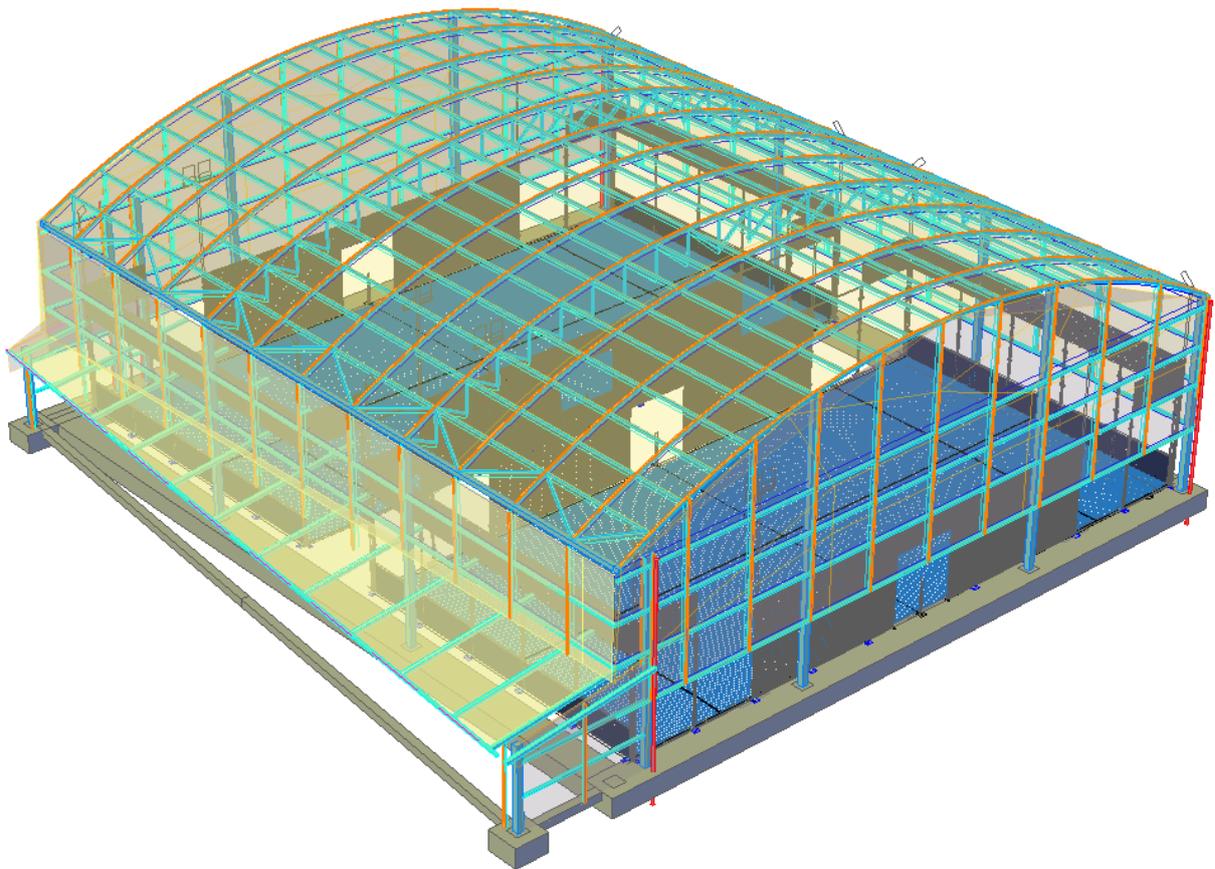
Thongsbridge Tennis and Fitness Club
Proposed Covered Padel Courts

Design and Access Statement



THONGSBRIDGE

Tennis & Fitness



Summary of the Proposal:

Thongsbridge Tennis Club are looking to expand their facility and increase the appeal to both new and existing users by offering facilities to play Padel Tennis. Padel is a rapidly growing sport in its own right, which is very similar to traditional tennis, but is easier to learn, as the ball moves more slowly and can be played off the walls without going out of play. As such it is generally seen as a more relaxed and accessible sport, which is attracting new players and providing the associated physical and mental health benefits to new people.

Padel requires purpose-built courts, which are slightly smaller than traditional tennis courts but are also surrounded by rebound walls that form part of the playing surface, in a similar way to squash. In order for this to be a true all year-round facility, the proposal is for two courts to be covered and floodlit, plus an additional third open air court. They are all to be built in front of the existing main building, with the two covered courts replacing the mini-tennis courts and one of the full-sized courts. The third, open court will sit where the fitness studio (housed in a portable building) currently is, with this portable building unit being relocated further north, on the asphalt area at the end of the main building. The development would also include car parking improvements with a reinforced gravel surface, native tree planting and the creation of approximately 65m of native hedge, separating the courts from the parking area.



Pre-app

Prior to submitting this application, a pre-app submission was made to Kirklees Council Planning Department. Much of the final design included here is very similar to the earlier submission, but several key considerations have been taken into account. Following feedback and as a result of its Green Belt location, changes have been made to significantly reduce what could be viewed as the 'harm' associated with the proposals and demonstrate the benefits to the local community.

The final response to the pre-app was published in November 2023 - Ref: 2023/21090

The Current Site:

The site for the two covered courts is now mainly occupied by the mini-tennis courts, which are surrounded by steel mesh fence and sits between the main building and the car parking area. They will also extend slightly into the full-size courts (green), replacing the more southern one.



At present the fitness studio occupies a 15x8m portable building, raised slightly above the gently sloping hard-standing in front of the main tennis club building. Being slightly raised as it is, some flood water can pass underneath it if required, although flows would be impeded. Access is via a raised platform to one door and an accessible ramp to another.



Behind (to the north of) the main tennis club building is an asphalt surfaced area, which is currently used on an ad-hoc basis for various activities.

It measures approximately 38m by 9m and lies flush with the adjacent tennis court. It is accessed from in front of the main building and is surrounded by a welded steel fence.



Beyond the tennis courts there is a large area that was cleared a number of years ago and features a surface of road planings. It is currently used as car parking, but in more of an overflow capacity. The lack of marked bays means that vehicles are often not parked closely together and it currently looks somewhat unloved.



Beyond this hard standing is an area of rough grass/other vegetation and some low bunds formed when the area was created.



Tree felling and replanting:

To the northern boundary of the site is an area of deciduous woodland, with Hagg Dyke (a tributary of the River Holme) running through it. Most of this land is on an unregistered plot, although it has been informally looked after by the tennis club for a number of years. Various options have been explored to develop parts of this area, to enable the relocation of one of the outdoor tennis courts, but it has been decided not to pursue that as part of this application, and to focus on the more open land providing the Padel Courts with minimum disruption to the setting.

Although now only one tree is scheduled to be removed, a number of new trees are to be planted around the parking area. The redesign of this space will soften the appearance of the car parking area, and allow it to blend in more gradually with the woodland behind, helping ensure its appropriateness in a Green Belt setting and significantly softening this transition to a more natural area compared to the current situation.



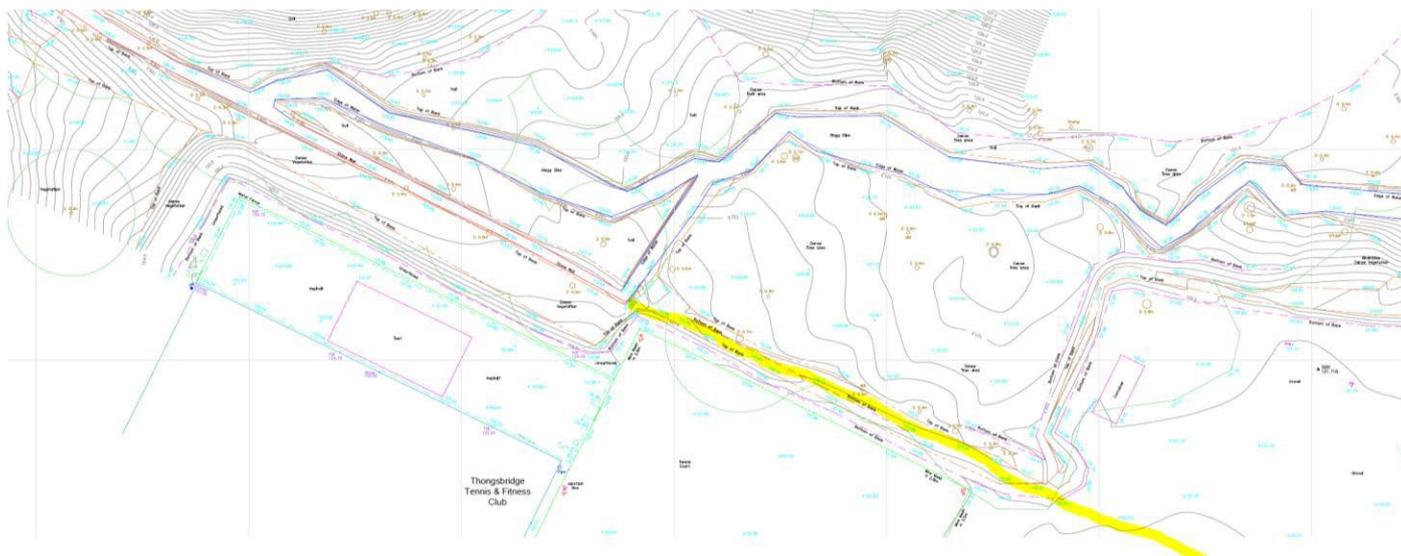
Not extending beyond the existing tennis courts retains all but one mature tree, and it is proposed to plant new native throughout the car park area and in other strategic locations, which would not only increase the overall tree numbers, but also visually break up these areas significantly. What is currently a large open area of compacted road planings would be broken up into a series of smaller parking areas, separated by trees. The single tree to be removed is a tall, straggly sycamore, which is growing within the club's land in the car park area, and appears to be suffering some sort of die back.

It is also proposed that a hedge would be planted between the parking area and both the tennis courts and padel courts. This would likely be predominantly beech or Hornbeam, to provide dense cover and shield the courts from car headlights in the parking area when being used in darkness. It would also provide shelter and habitat for small birds and other animals. The hedge, as shown is approximately 65m long.

River Holme + Hagg Dyke

While the whole site is clearly very close to the River Holme, all the major development proposals, such as the courts themselves are well clear of the 8m offset set by the Environment Agency from 'Main Rivers'. The only parts of the proposals which encroach slightly on this are vehicle access to the car parking, which is on an existing macadam surface, the back edge of a few proposed new parking spaces, and some of the proposed new tree planting.

To the north of the development lies Hagg dyke – a small tributary of the River Holme. Many online maps, show this stream as running through an artificial channel (presumably an old mill race or similar) along the northern boundary of the club's land, until it joins the Holme. For many years now though, this has not been the case. Although a small amount of water does enter the old race, the eastern half of this channel no longer exists and water flows NE again to rejoin the natural stream bed, as shown on the plans and Topographical survey below.



The image above shows the route of Hagg Dyke as it currently is, with the yellow highlighted section indicating where its course is still shown on many maps. If this were the case the proposals would be more complicated but, the section indicated has not been a water course for many years.

The photograph below is taken from Hagg Dyke, looking SE along the channel connecting it to the assumed former mill race. Any water entering this race has flown along this route for many years.





The two pictures above both show the old 'mill race' with its stone lined channel. The picture on the left is looking downstream, from where a small proportion of the water flowing down Hagg Dyke is diverted, and the right-hand photograph is looking upstream from near where the water is diverted back to its natural course.

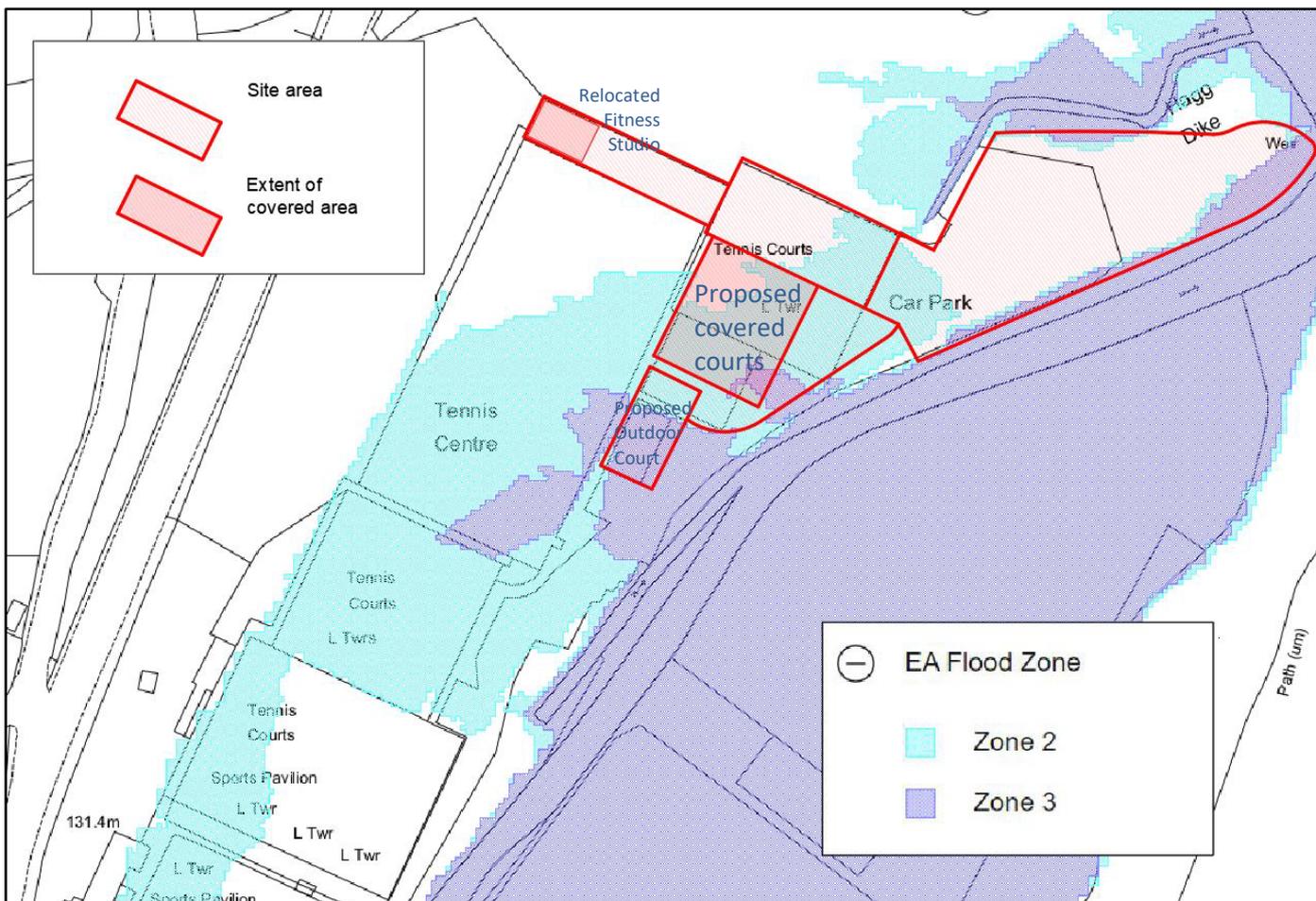
Nowadays, although some water does enter this channel still it is virtually blocked, and there is hardly any flow to it at most times, with the vast majority continuing along the bed of Hagg Dyke itself, shown below.



A separate section addresses surface water drainage and flood risk, on the following page.

Surface Water Drainage and Flood Risk:

Although the whole tennis club is very near to the River Holme, the chosen location for these covered courts is outside of the 8m buffer zone set by the Environment Agencies from the main river (River Holme). It is partly within flood zones 2 and 3 however. Despite this, due to the nature of the structures involved the proposed development is considered to be compatible, especially considering current use as tennis courts and a portable building. A procedure would be implemented by the club that makes use of Environment Agency automated flood warnings and ensures that bookings are cancelled and nobody is allowed access to the courts before river levels are predicted to reach a critical level. The EA Flood Zone areas are shown on the image below.



Currently the site for the proposed padel courts is occupied by uncovered outdoor tennis courts and surrounding hardstanding used for car parking. Much of this area is within Environment Agency Flood Zone 2, although a small amount of the covered courts and most of the open-air court are within Zone 3. Currently the fitness studio, in its portable building are almost entirely within zone three, but the proposal moves this out of either zone 2 or zone 3 and would decrease the vulnerability of this element to flooding.

The proposal for the new courts has a canopy covering an area of approx. 586m². This is to be built over the current hardstanding. Rainwater falling on the canopy will be captured in gutters around the edge, then through downpipes, where it can then be connected into soft planted areas within the 'social space' with overflows to the existing surface water drainage, to flow on into the river via the existing outfall. Intercepting this run-off first and allowing a degree of infiltration will reduce the load on this system compared with current arrangements.

During pre-application discussions with the Local Planning Authority it was acknowledged that the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) had already offered their informal opinion on this matter – that the areas in flood zone 3 are recreational areas anyway that would still allow water in and out, therefore they would not impact on flooding and compensatory storage would not be needed.

It was also suggested that preparation for floods would be significantly improved with a managed flood plan for the complex that has a clear plan based on receiving flood warnings from the Environment Agency' automatic service and it is recommended that such a plan be submitted with any future application. A copy of the club's new Flood Risk Plan is submitted as part of this application.

At the time of the pre-app, the proposal included relocating the portable fitness studio building on the edges of flood zones 2 and 3. Subsequently the proposals have been amended to locate it behind the main building, approximately 25m from the nearest zone 2 area and 50m from the nearest part of zone 3. On this basis, as the 'surfacing and siting of a new building'

Various conversations have been held with the Lead Local Flood Authority in developing these proposals to ensure that they are compatible and a separate Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment forms part of this application, as was stated would be required in the Pre-app feedback.

Community Benefit

Padel is a rapidly growing sport, closely linked to traditional tennis, but requiring specialist facilities. It is easier to learn to play, as the ball moves more slowly and can be played off the surrounding walls instead of going out, making it much more accessible to many people. Currently very few facilities exist in the area, and this would be the sole venue within the Holme Valley.

A recent BBC News article on Look North (shown 26th March 2024) highlighted the growing popularity of the sport in West Yorkshire and described it as 'one of the fastest growing sports in the world'.

Policy LP47 sets out the Council's intention to enable healthy and active lifestyles by improving access to a range of high-quality and accessible sports facilities. This proposal is fully in line with the principles of this policy, by providing local people by providing the opportunity to play padel in their area, without having to travel a great distance.

Car Parking + Access:

The proposal includes suggested car parking improvements as well as the courts themselves. While it is expected that new Padel courts will bring increased visitor numbers, the actual total amount of extra visitors is thought to be well within manageable limits. To help deal efficiently with any increase though, the large area currently allowed for informal car parking beyond the club's facilities is to be improved with subtly marked bays being created to encourage visitors to park more efficiently, while actually taking up less space and allowing for biodiversity gains through native tree planting etc. It is also predicted that the new facilities will allow the club to be better used at times of day when it is currently less busy (due to lighting and the canopy) rather than purely increasing its total capacity.

Once all three courts are in operation, it is expected that even if all four were being used for doubles matches, with each player arriving separately, that would be a maximum of 12 vehicles. The club intends to offer booking times staggered to be out of sync with other bookings for the traditional tennis courts, to minimise the chances of users all arriving and leaving together, to minimise any pressure on the main entrance off Miry Lane.

Currently there are two designated accessible bays near the main entrance, which are to be retained and the proposal includes three further accessible spaces adjacent to the covered Padel Courts and social area. These accessible spaces would be on fully a fully hard surfaced area to eliminate any risk of the surfacing material posing access issues to users.

Further cycle parking would be included by installing additional racks between the main entrance and the new courts, increasing capacity and encouraging sustainable transport.

The proposals also removes an existing tight pinch-point, increasing safety by giving better visibility and space for pedestrian access between the car park and other facilities to be segregated. An alternative layout had been considered which left both tennis courts in their existing positions, and built all the new padel courts further south, but this created a secondary pinch point, 25m south and it was felt that on balance that arrangement created a number of safety compromises, so it has not been drawn up in detail and developed further. (see accompanying email from Highway Development Management).

The Proposals:

The proposal is to replace the two mini tennis courts in front of the main tennis centre building with two purpose-built padel tennis courts, enclosed beneath a polycarbonate canopy over a steel frame structure. It will also extend into the more southerly of the two full size tennis courts, immediately north of the mini courts.

A third court, without the canopy, is planned to sit adjacent to these, on the area where the fitness centre is currently housed in a portable building. To facilitate these courts being built, the fitness centre would be relocated on the existing macadam surfaced area at the end of the main building.

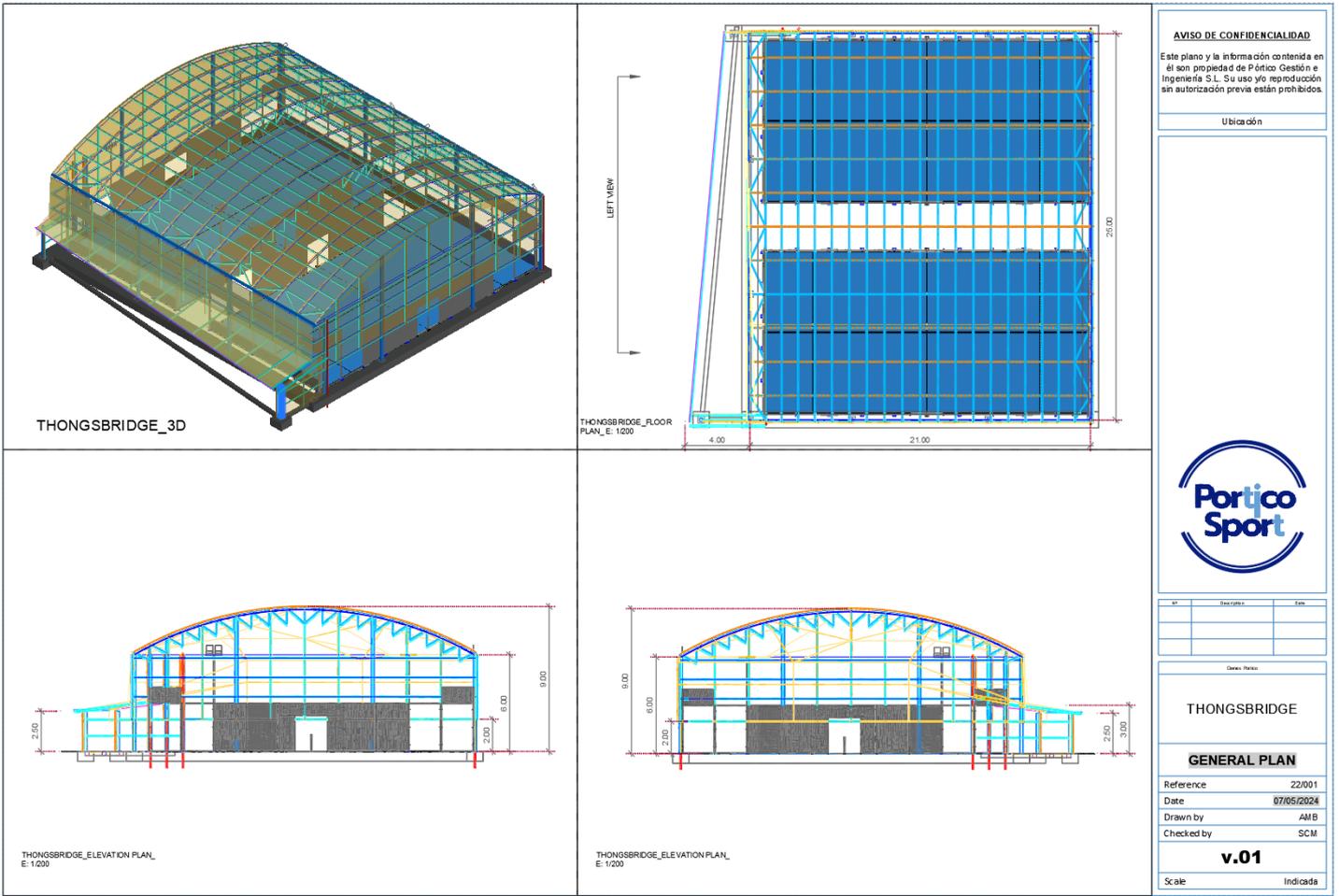
In addition to the courts themselves, a small 'social area' with outdoor seating etc. is planned next to the covered courts, and the car parking area is to be improved through the creation of marked bays interspersed with native tree planting, and separated from the courts by a native hedge, which will reduce the impact of glare from headlights for users, but also contribute towards enhancing the biodiversity of the area.

The courts themselves have sides that are partly a steel mesh, and partly a toughened glass. Beyond the extents of the playing surface is a wider circulation space giving access to the entrance gates which sit either side of the net. For the covered courts, all of this is contained beneath a polycarbonate canopy over a steel frame structure. Floodlights would be mounted on the main upright posts and gutters around the edges of the roof would catch runoff and direct it via downpipes to into planting areas around the social area. Runoff would be picked up by the existing surface water drainage network that currently deals with water falling on the hardstanding area, so no net increase in load, and intercepting some of it first and allowing a degree of infiltration will reduce the total load on this system compared current arrangements.

The images on the following page show the courts and canopy structure that is being proposed. The design has subsequently been refined to have a single arched structure covering the two side-by-side padel courts, reaching a height of 9m at the apex of the arch (the main tennis centre building has its roofline at 10.6m) and 7m at the eaves. The polycarbonate canopy will extend down the sides to a height of 2.5m, allowing a good degree of protection from adverse weather for the users, but still retaining a sense of open-ness and certainly not representing an issue for water flow during extreme flood events. The drawing also shows a small canopy beyond the main structure which allows for a covered 'social' space, adjoining the courts themselves. The central gap between the two padel courts themselves may also be increased to c.3.0m, with a slight corresponding increase in overall width.



(Visualisations of the proposed structure)



(Images of a similar covered padel tennis court)

Views

One of the main issues discussed at pre-app stage was the impact of the proposal on the green belt. The following images demonstrate the limited visibility of the proposals from publicly accessible key viewpoints.



(Winter view from footpath behind cricket pitch)



(Winter view from Miry Lane, across cricket pitch)



(View from Higher up Miry Lane)

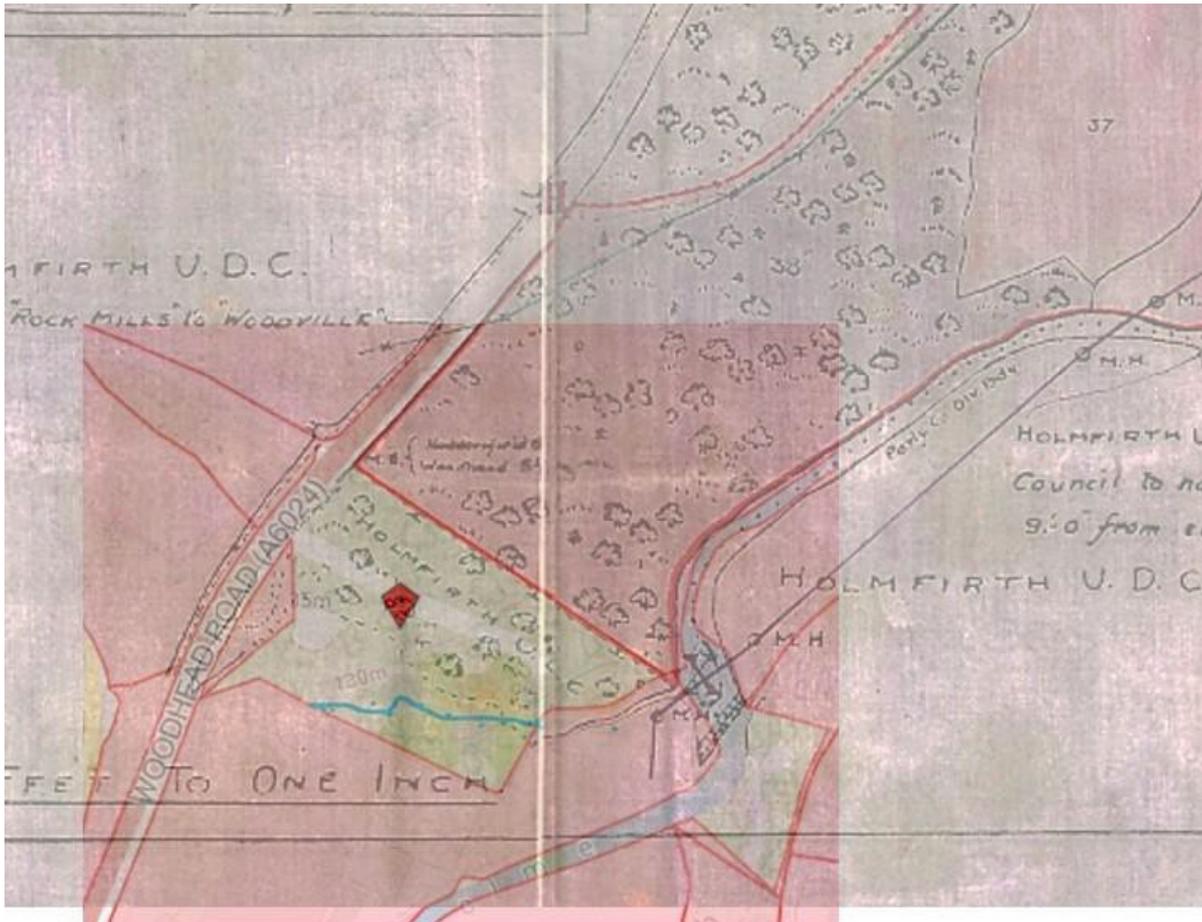
These demonstrate how filtered the views of the tennis club building are. The proposed canopy would be neutrally coloured, lower and sit immediately in front of the main building. Tree planting, within and in front of the car park would also further screen views of this area.

Further views of the site and its surroundings can be seen in the accompanying video.

Unregistered Land

Several of the possible layouts that have been explored required works on an area of unregistered land – the club believed that it was in their ownership, but investigations have shown that it is currently unregistered, although historic documents appear to show that it was once part of a bigger parcel of land (including the current tennis club site) that belonged to Holmfirth UDC, and was transferred into the ownership of Kirklees when it was formed in 1974.

Research has been undertaken both by Kirklees Council staff and the club and their legal advisors in attempt to ascertain further details regarding the legal ownership of this parcel of land, but to no avail. Following legal advice, Thongsbridge Tennis and Fitness Club have taken out 'Adverse Possession Insurance' to cover themselves in the event of a party with proof of ownership coming forward.



(Composite historic maps showing ownership of surround parcels of land)

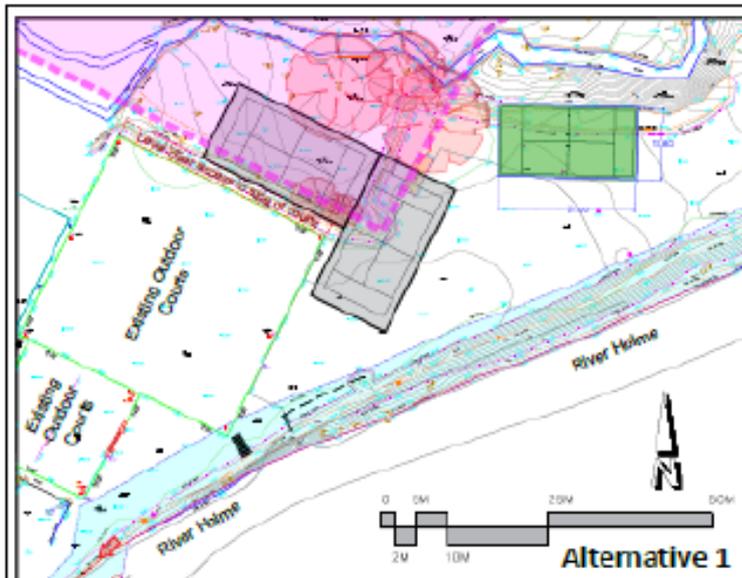
Design Development

The following pages show various alternative layouts that have been considered through the process of reaching this final proposal for the padel courts.

Prior to the pre-app, six alternatives were considered, mostly looking at using some of the unregistered land to the north. Alternative six had been the preferred option, but complications and uncertainty about costs of the retaining structures required and associated drainage have led to this being dropped, and a solution based on alternative 5 (but also moving the 2 full size courts slightly) has been developed that allows for all three padel courts, without any of them crossing into the 8m buffer zone from the 'main river'.

Following the pre-app and associated feedback and discussions it was decided to proceed on basis of not extending into this space at this stage. The design submitted for pre-app included moving one of the outdoor tennis courts into this area, to avoid losing current full-size court capacity, but it has been decided not to include that element within these proposals.

The design submitted at Pre-app stage is also included at the end of this document.



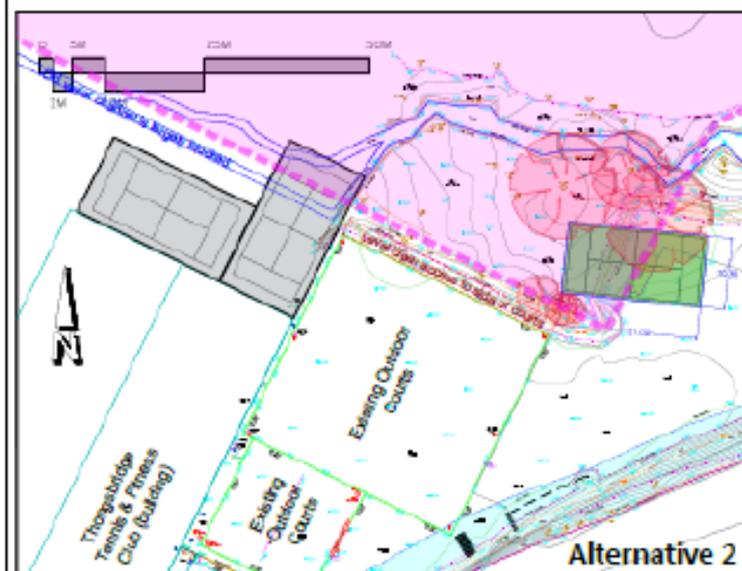
Alternative 1

Pros:

- Covered courts are 'out the way' with minimal visual impact.
- Partly over existing hard-surfaced area, reducing extra run-off impact.
- Minimal impact on existing mature trees.

Cons:

- Construction and maintenance access may be more awkward.
- EXTENDS INTO LAND OF UNCONFIRMED OWNERSHIP



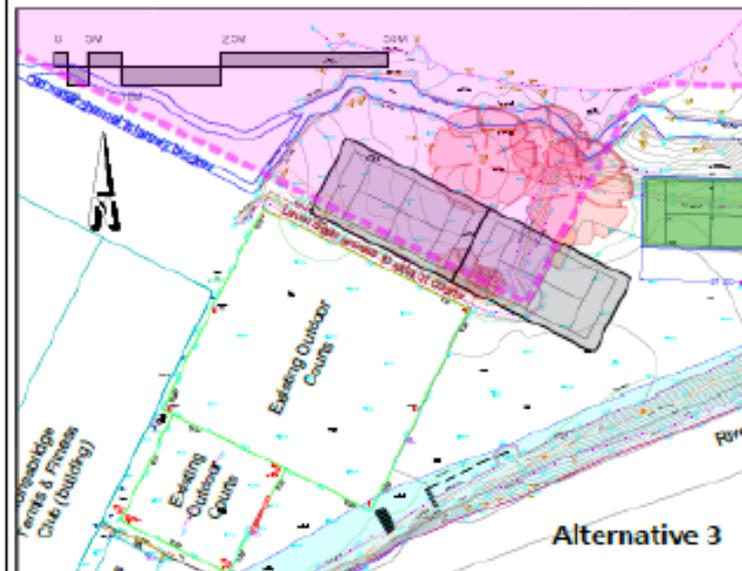
Alternative 2

Pros:

- Covered courts are 'out the way' with minimal visual impact.
- Partly over existing hard-surfaced area, reducing extra run-off impact.
- Minimal impact on existing mature trees.
- Maximises available space for parking and other uses.

Cons:

- Construction and maintenance access may be more awkward.
- EXTENDS INTO LAND OF UNCONFIRMED OWNERSHIP
- EXTENDS ACROSS ROUTE OF CURRENT WATERCOURSE



Alternative 3

Pros:

- Covered courts are partly 'out the way' with reduced visual impact.
- Could be built with minimal impact on existing mature trees.
- Construction and maintenance access relatively straight forward.

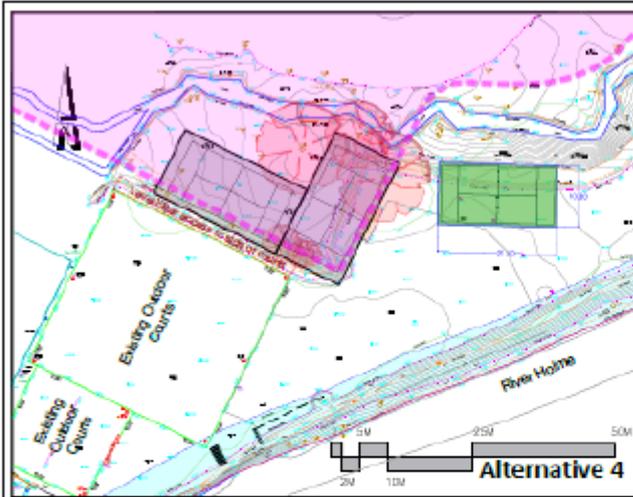
Cons:

- EXTENDS INTO LAND OF UNCONFIRMED OWNERSHIP

Proposed Covered Padel Court	Proposed Panamiric Padel Court	Land without confirmed ownership	Approximate route of watercourse

Notes:
The position of the panamiric court is only indicative - the suggested locations for the covered courts leave a large amount of space.

<p>Kirklees COUNCIL Head Office, 1st Floor, Huddersfield S1 1 6J</p>			
Project: THONGSBIDGE_TENNIS_CLUB			
Page: THONGSBIDGE_TENNIS_CLUB			
Drawing Title: Alternative Padel Court Layouts - Sheet 1			
Author: 133610	BF	Checked:	
Date: 20/10/2022		Scale:	
<p>Approved by: </p>			
Project No: LAD_563	Date: 06-003	Revision: REV	



Alternative 4

- Pros:**
- Covered courts are 'relatively 'out the way' with moderate visual impact.
 - Construction and maintenance access easier than Option 3.

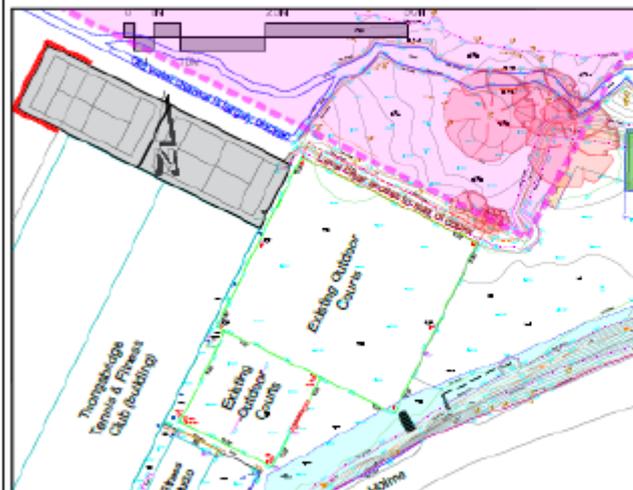
- Cons:**
- Groundworks required would be extensive, due to proximity to watercourse.
 - Requires felling a number of mature trees.
 - ALMOST ENTIRELY WITHIN LAND OF UNCONFIRMED OWNERSHIP.**



Alternative 5

- Pros:**
- Covered courts are 'out the way' with minimal visual impact.
 - Partly over existing hard-surfaced area, reducing extra run-off impact.
 - Minimal impact on existing mature trees.

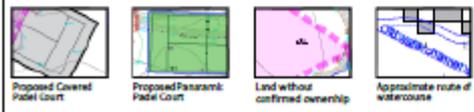
- Cons:**
- REQUIRES A NEW LOCATION FOR FITNESS CENTRE BUILDING**
 - Just crosses into 8m buffer zone from 'Main River'.



Alternative 6

- Pros:**
- Covered courts are 'out the way' with minimal visual impact.
 - Partly over existing hard-surfaced area, reducing extra run-off impact.
 - Minimal impact on existing mature trees.

- Cons:**
- Construction and maintenance access may be more awkward.
 - Requires cutting into bank and large retaining wall to be built, holding back the bank - although this could perhaps form the back wall of the court.



Notes:
The position of the paramark court is only indicative - the suggested locations for the covered courts leave a large amount of space.

Kirklees COUNCIL
South Leeds, 9th Floor, Holbeck 421 6 0

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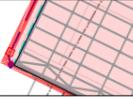
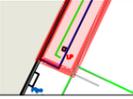
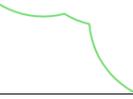
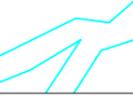
THONGSBRIDGE_TENNIS_CLUB

Alternative Padel Court Layouts - Sheet 2

Project	Client	Author
THONGSBRIDGE_TENNIS_CLUB	THONGSBRIDGE_TENNIS_CLUB	THONGSBRIDGE_TENNIS_CLUB
Issue	Date	Rev
LAD_563	04/02/22	REV



Key to Symbols

-  Existing tennis club buildings.
-  Proposed new Padel Tennis Courts with canopy
-  Proposed canopy fixed to side of existing building to provide covered walkway to court entrance
-  Extent of tree canopy
-  Water course

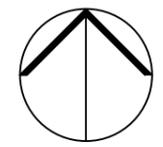


Client
THONGSBRIDGE_TENNIS_CLUB

Project
THONGSBRIDGE_TENNIS_CLUB

Drawing Title
SITE_PLAN

Scale	Drawn	Checked
1:500@A3	SF 22/01/2023	
Cad Ref c:\users\simonfagg\desktop\thongsbridgetennis\january 2023 drawings\january 2023 layout draft		



Direction of North

Project No.	Scale	Drawing No.	Revision
LAD_563		PP-01	REV