

Hi Lesley, please discard my earlier comments today and accept these comments in lieu of them,

“Thank you for consulting the Environmental Protection Team on the above application.

I email further to my response of 17th June 2023 and acknowledge receipt of Venta Acoustics response dated 27th June.

Please accept this email as confirmation that we recommend refusal of the application as we are of the opinion that noise arising from the proposed padel court use will have a significant adverse impact on the health and quality of life of existing noise sensitive receptors within the vicinity i.e., occupiers of nearby dwellings. Paragraph 191 of the NPPF says that planning decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects of pollution on health and living conditions, and in doing so should avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life. Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 30-005-20190722 of Government guidance on planning and noise says that noise at this exposure level will cause a material change in behaviour such as keeping windows closed for most of the time or avoiding certain activities during periods when noise is present. We are of the opinion that noise arising from the padel courts would likely cause a material change in behaviour and therefore the development should be avoided.

I have recently visited another local authority where they have received complaints from residents about padel court noise. In this case neighbour's back gardens are next to the padel courts but are separated by several trees and bushes with no direct view of the courts. I witnessed noise from the use of the padel courts at a distance approximately 20-25m south-east of the boundary of the nearest court whilst standing in a complainant's back garden. I was of the opinion that the padel court noise had a detrimental impact on the use and enjoyment of the property, and that avoidance of use of the back garden and increased sensitisation to the noise would likely occur. The complainant said that they had no problem with the noise arising from its former use as a tennis court. During my visit all the courts were in use, including a court being used by 4 people which seemed to be the source of the most disturbing noise. The boundary of this court is at least 30m away from the position at which I witnessed the noise.

During my visit I identified four different types of noise which contributed to the noise disturbance, including impact noise and people noise. Impact noise arising from the impact of the ball against the bat was the most problematic, followed by the noise of the ball hitting the chain link fence, and the noise from the ball hitting the glass. My understanding is that the chain link fence around the top and sides of the court is commonplace with UK padel courts to prevent the ball leaving the court, whilst Impact of the ball against the glass enclosure is a legitimate part of the game. The noise of the ball hitting a padel bat is audibly different from that of a tennis ball hitting a tennis racket. Padel and tennis ball impacts have been described as 'bop' and 'thunk' type noises respectively (Clarke Saunders Acoustics White Paper 'Differences in Sound Characteristics of Padel and Tennis' - August 2023). Tennis could be described as a more rhythmic and audibly "pleasant" type of noise, whereas in my experience padel ball noise seems audibly more "explosive" which resonates and is therefore less pleasant in my opinion. Having witnessed padel being played it would appear to me to be more energetic than tennis. Padel courts are typically occupied by four players and are smaller courts. This means that the ball is kept in play for longer, and there are more padel/ball impact noises in any given time period than there would be with a typical tennis game. During my visit I also noted vocal noise arising from the padel courts, which included raised voices and shouting. It is reasonable to assume that more players will equate to more vocal noise.

The noise report submitted with this application dated 17.08.2023 concludes that sound from the proposed two padel courts "...is not expected to be prominent or intrusive against the existing noise levels in the area, a low noise impact is expected from the scheme". It says, "...the sound generated is expected to be similar to the existing sounds levels, a significant impact is not expected from the proposals". Existing noise levels in the area were monitored. Existing noise data from another site which has padel courts was used to predict padel court noise levels at dwellings in Hayling Island. Mitigation is proposed, and the predicted noise levels include this mitigation. These noise levels have then been compared against the Sports England Design Guidance Note 'Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) Acoustics – Planning Implications' (August Revision 001). This guidance says that in order to avoid moderate annoyance in the daytime and evenings, as set by The World Health Organisation's Guidelines for Community Noise, an upper limit of 50 dB LAeq(1 hour) external to residential properties and within external living areas for AGP noise should be avoided.

There is currently no published methodology for assessing the impact of noise arising from padel courts on noise sensitive receptors. This is probably because there is an absence or paucity of scientific evidence on exposure and health outcomes related to these types of noise sources. The Sports England Design Guidance Note is related to noise arising from sports played on artificial sports pitches, and the guidance states that noise levels were measured during sports sessions including football, hockey, and rugby. The Note does not refer to padel court noise. The acoustic report acknowledges that the Guidance Note is not applicable to padel court noise, and says, "...the noise sources involved are similar to the types of sport played on AGPs (shouting and impact of balls against surrounding barriers." Having witnessed the noise from padel courts my opinion is that the noise arising from the ball impacting on the padel bat cannot be said to be similar to a ball hitting a barrier. Further the reference to the World Health Organisation Guidelines for Community Noise (1999) within the Sports England Guidance is inappropriate. The absolute noise levels given in the WHO Guidelines are based on acceptable noise levels arising from discrete, anonymous transportation noise sources, and not recreational activities. The WHO Guidelines are clear to note that harmful effects of noise do not depend solely on the sound pressure level e.g., LAeq,T, but also on the character of the noise. This is why it has been important in this case, to witness the impact of padel court noise at nearby dwellings.

As noted above, the noise of the ball hitting the bat was the principal noise which was witnessed to cause the most disturbance during my visit to another local authority area. LAmax noise levels ranging 50-54 dB were witnessed whilst stood in the neighbour's garden, which was at an approximate distance of 20-25m south-east of the nearest padel court. The predicted LAmax noise levels at dwellings in the noise report submitted with this application range from 64-71 dB, which are at least 17-21 dB higher than what I had witnessed. The noise report also suggests that whilst noise from the padel court may be heard, "...the levels would not be prominent against the general noise climate." The author of the report says that music and shouting and rail noise was clearly audible from the funfair during their site visits. I have visited the area and did not witness this. I witnessed what was in my opinion a relatively quiet area, with road traffic noise in the background. The noise of what I assume was pétanque was being played, and this was very quiet. I therefore disagree that the noise arising from padel court use would not be prominent, when in my opinion it would be very prominent. My visit to the area and to another local authority area confirmed that reliance on LAeq,T and LAmax noise levels cannot necessarily be relied upon to predict the true impact arising from padel court noise. It should also be noted that padel is becoming a very popular sport, and I have been told that many clubs have a waiting list for use of their padel courts. Therefore, there is the possibility that the courts subject of this application could be in constant use."

Regards

Helen Le-Vallee, MCIEH

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My working pattern – Monday to Friday

Advance notice of leave – None



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