Racquet Space

Planning, Design and Access Statement
Full Planning Application for the Erection of a Padel and Pickleball Centre
Land off Bourne Road, Spalding.

Document Reference: 1648 1 DAS WR

Date: October 2025

rdc
Robert Doughty Consultancy

32 High Street, Helpringham,
Sleaford, Lincolnshire NG34 0RA
Tel: 01529 421646
Email: admin@rdc-landplan.co.uk
Web: www.rdc-landplan.co.uk



town planning



landscape architecture



architecture

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 1

2. THE APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDINGS 2

3. THE PROPOSAL 3

4. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE LOCATION – SEQUENTIAL REVIEW 6

5. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS 9

6. DESIGN AND ACCESS 11

7. CONCLUSIONS 14

APPENDIX A

Letters from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and Pickleball England

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been produced in support of a Full Planning Application for the erection of a Padel and Pickleball centre with associated welfare facilities, vehicular access from Bourne Road, car parking and associated landscaping.

1.2. The application is supported by all the necessary drawings, a Flood Risk Assessment and a Noise Assessment. Pre-application advice was sought from the County Council in relation to archaeology and it is anticipated that the site will shortly be the subject of an Archaeological Evaluation in the form of trial trenching.

1.3. Prior to the submission of this planning application, the principle of the proposal was discussed informally with the Local Planning Authority and the County Council as local highway authority.

1.4. The Local Planning Authority opined that the relationship with the settlement would need to be demonstrated as acceptable. The highway authority accepted the principle of development and would expect to comment on the detail of such a scheme when available.

1.5. This statement sets out all the material considerations surrounding the consideration of the application and concludes that the proposal is acceptable when measured against the development plan and the relevant guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

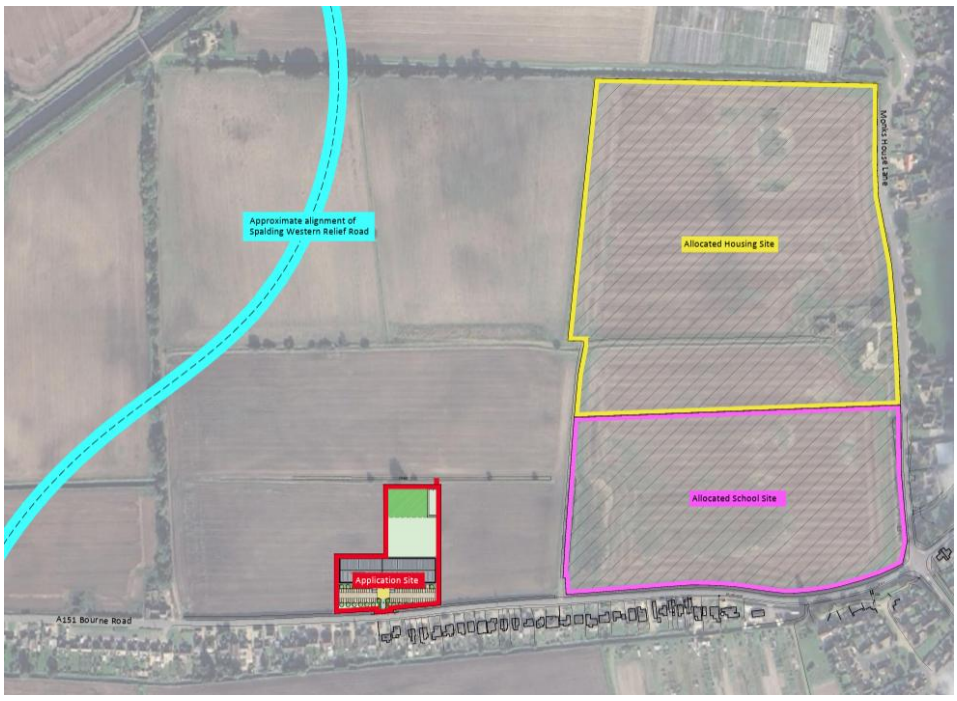
2. THE APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1. The proposal is located on the western edge of Spalding off the Bourne Road, which is the principal road into the town from the west.

2.2. The application site consists of the southern part of an open agricultural field on the edge of Spalding. The field has a deciduous hedgerow along the Bourne Road frontage, a field drain to the northern boundary, the remainder of the agricultural field lies to the east and west. The topography of the site is largely flat, however, it lies approximately 1.5m lower than Bourne Road. To the southern side of Bourne Road there is a continuous built-up frontage of predominantly residential development which stretches between Pode Hole and the western edge of Spalding proper.

2.3. The settlement boundary for Spalding as defined in the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan ("the Local Plan") lies to the east and the application site is within a safeguarding zone identified for the Spalding Western Relief Road. The actual route of the relief road, as confirmed by County Council, lies to the west of the application site and there is a local plan housing allocation (Mon008), which is the subject of a current planning application (H16-0584-25), and an allocation for a new school which lie between the application site and the current settlement boundary.

2.4. These are all shown on the plan below.



3. THE PROPOSAL

3.1. It is proposed to develop Racquet Space as the new home for Padel and Pickleball in South Holland; where sport and the community meet to create a vibrant and inclusive hub based around state-of-the-art facilities.

3.2. The eastern half of the building will consist of 4 Padel courts, each measuring 20 x 10 metres and the western side of the building will consist of 4 pickleball courts, each measuring 6.1 x 13.4 metres. The middle space between these two court areas will consist of changing rooms, toilets, a café, a sports equipment shop, a reception, a social hub, and the main entrance for the building with a mezzanine over with seating for viewing the courts. The height of the building varies because a taller eaves height is needed for Padel (8m) compared to Pickleball (6m). To the front (south) off the Bourne Road frontage there will be a new entrance and car park and to the rear of the building there will be an area for Biodiversity.

3.3. Padel is gaining national traction as the UK's fastest growing sport, played at least once by over 400,000 people in Great Britain in 2024 alone, up from just 15,000 in 2019. The number of courts nationally has swelled to nearly 1000 across 300 venues, with over 60,000 adults now playing padel at least twice a month. Awareness among adults of the sport reached 43% of the population (about 23 million) by early 2025. The rise in popularity can be attributed in part to the fact that, as a non-contact sport, people were able to participate in the sport during the pandemic.

3.4. Pickleball England reports a 65% year-on-year rise in membership, with roughly 40,000-50,000 players in England alone, and nationwide numbers are growing fast. Participation is especially strong across all age groups, from schoolchildren through to retirees. The growth is only at the beginning of an upward curve. In the US, pickleball saw a 311% growth in the last three years, with the sport now having nearly 20 million participants.

3.5. Both sports have huge international growth with Padel being particularly popular in Spain and Southern Europe and Pickleball in the US and India. Across the rest of the World, both sports are experiencing rapid growth.

3.6. Together, both sports share core strengths: they are inclusive, social, provide a hub within a community, easy to learn, and are excellent for physical and mental wellbeing.

Why Spalding Needs This Venue

3.7. Spalding has an estimated population of between 31,000 and 37,000 residents; with the wider area of South Holland having a population of 98,000. Despite recent investments in sport and leisure at the Castle Sports Complex, there are currently no dedicated indoor Padel or Pickleball facilities within the town, South Holland area or even the whole of the East Midlands and East Anglia.

3.8. It is hoped that the facility will become a premier sports venue for the whole of the east of the country; being one of the first to offer Padel (the first in South Holland) and the first to offer dedicated Pickleball courts, attracting locals for recreational play with visitors from all over the country joining them for tournament and competitive play.

3.9. Racquet Space offers a new type of recreation hub for residents, not only expanding sports access for young people and older adults, but also helping improve public health, reduce inactivity and supporting local social infrastructure. It aligns with the council's goals around community resilience, health promotion, and economic uplift.

Community & Economic Benefits

3.10. We anticipate the proposal will bring the following benefits:

- Local employment: We estimate that 10 fulltime staff positions year-round will be created, plus seasonal work for school camps and expanded programming.
- Use of local trades and suppliers: Wherever feasible, the construction and engineering teams, materials and services will be sourced locally.
- Community programming:
  - School partnerships and afterschool clubs
  - Accessible offering for older adults and disabled participants
  - Disability friendly coaching and inclusive access
  - Social events and mixed aged sessions - for example, weekend open play and "match social" evenings
  - Summer camps, beginner and women's programmes designed to boost local participation across all age groups.

Sporting Strategy & Partner Engagement

3.11. The applicant has secured letters of support from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and Pickleball England, who endorse the vision and support the application. The letters from the Lawn Tennis Association and Pickleball England are reproduced as Appendix A. The plans align closely with the LTA's Padel development goals: increasing awareness, doubling regular participation, expanding courts across the country and growing the coaching capacity from 40 to 700 activators.

3.12. Over 75% of Padel venues in the UK now engage in school outreach, free sessions, and subsidised coaching for underserved groups. The venue is designed with that same mission: spreading the benefits of racket sports to all sections of Spalding's community.

3.13. Behind the Padel element of the proposal is a fourth generation Lincolnshire farming family, with a long history in the local area. Having run successful businesses in agriculture, retail and online, the family is passionate about building community through sport.

3.14. Behind the Pickleball aspect are three friends from Spalding, a Chartered Accountant who was a partner in a large regional practice for over 30 years, a financial advisor running his own successful firm and an owner/director of a successful local air-conditioning company. Between them they have experience of coaching sports such as cricket and football and managing local and national speedway teams.

3.15. The joint aim is to create a venue that feels welcoming, inclusive, fun, and rooted in local values - where neighbours meet, kids learn, older adults stay active, and people discover racket sports for the first time.

3.16. This proposal brings together two of Britain's fastest growing racquet sports - padel and pickleball - in a modern, accessible, single indoor facility that will benefit the wider Spalding community. It supports economic development, job creation, and increased sporting participation, while also strongly aligning with national and local objectives.

4. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE LOCATION – SEQUENTIAL REVIEW

4.1. The application site lies beyond, but close to, the settlement boundary for Spalding off Bourne Road, which is the principal route into the town from the west. We first reviewed whether or not there were any suitable buildings or sites within the settlement boundary which were 'reasonably available' before choosing a countryside location.

4.2. The design of the building is bespoke in that it needs a specific minimum height to eaves (8m for Padel and 6m for Pickleball), an unsubdivided interior, together with a floor area in excess of 3,000sqm and, therefore, the likelihood of there being such premises which are reasonably available in Spalding or Pinchbeck is slim.

4.3. Some more intensive indoor sports provision can be considered to be a town centre use, where a 'town centre first' sequential approach should be adopted. However, accommodating such a proposal within the centre of what is a modest sized market town is always going to present difficulties and a review of the internet-based property websites reveals that the only site available is the Old Drill Hall at 10 Haverfield Road (out of centre), which has neither the eaves height nor the floor area to accommodate the proposal. In addition, the proposal does create some noise and, therefore, locating the proposal where background noise levels are low will also present problems in terms of the compatibility with existing uses.

4.4. There is an undeveloped site for sale on the Pinchbeck Road close to the junction with the A151 (West Elloe Avenue), however, the site is an awkward shape to develop (being roughly triangular) and it is not large enough to accommodate the building, let alone any associated servicing or biodiversity net gain. In addition, there is a large 3-storey development of over-55s' accommodation immediately to the south that would be unacceptably impacted upon by the proposal.

4.5. We were unable to locate any other land or building within the settlement boundary of Spalding that was reasonably available and able to accommodate the proposal.

4.6. The next obvious location is the Enterprise Park in Pinchbeck. Here we found the former Peck's premises for sale, however, this is an unusual, shaped building that is not tall enough inside and, even if it were, it

would need significant alteration internally to remove the multiple subdivisions and provide a useable floorspace.

4.7. There is undeveloped land off Wardentree Lane, Pinchbeck, for sale which would be large enough to accommodate the development of the proposed sports facility. However, the site is allocated as "Proposed Main Employment Area" in the Local Plan and is covered by Policy 7 – Improving South East Lincolnshire's Employment Land Portfolio. Policy 7 states that such sites are reserved for main employment in "..Classes B1, B2 and B8". The development of employment land identified in the local plan is, therefore, considered to raise particular issues of principle which are at least the same as or possibly greater than those associated with the chosen countryside location.

4.8. The application site off Bourne Road is close to the western fringe of Spalding, which is characterised by existing residential development and which forms the location for further growth in relation to the Spalding Western Relief Road. To the east of the application site there is the housing allocation Mon008 which is currently the subject of a hybrid application for 434 dwellings (LPA ref H16-0584-25 by local housebuilder Seagate Homes Ltd. Subject to the grant of planning permission, work is due to start in the near future.

4.9. In addition to the housing allocation Mon008, there is also land allocated directly to the south for a new school. The application site lies within walking distance of a sizeable residential population and one which is continuing to grow. A new school close to the application site will, in time, allow for additional use of the proposed centre and, conversely, it will also broaden the sports offer for the school within walking distance.

4.10. To the west of the application site there is the route of the Spalding Western Relief Road. The route agreed by the County Council does not lie within the safeguarding area identified in the local plan. Pre-application discussions with the County Council as highway authority has confirmed that the route we have shown to be largely correct and this, together with the allocations mentioned above, are shown on the plan at paragraph 2.4 above.

4.11. Overall, the location of the proposal is ideal in that it is close to the town and lies within an area which is and will experience growth in the future. The site is within easy walking distance of a significant amount of residential development, which will assist in providing better sports provision for the local population.

5. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that, "If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

5.2. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan which was adopted in March 2019.

5.3. Spalding is identified as a 'Sub-Regional Centre' where development will be permitted that supports its role. Policy 1 sets out that in the countryside (beyond settlement boundaries) development will be permitted where it is necessary to meet the sustainable development needs of the area in terms of economic, community or environmental benefits. Clearly the proposal will assist in meeting the community needs of the town by adding to the sports and recreational facilities.

5.4. Policy 2 and 3 are development management policies, which set out the considerations that need to be satisfied and these include size, scale, layout, density, impact on amenity, sustainable drainage and flood risk. The proposed building has been designed to meet the requirements of the two sports that it will accommodate whilst ensuring the visual impact is kept to a minimum.

5.5. Policy 4: Approach to Flood Risk, requires applications be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment covering all sources of flooding and include the impacts of climate change. The development is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment which demonstrates that the site is safe from flooding and will not lead to flooding elsewhere. In terms of the Sequential Test, there are no other reasonably available sites in the area that are at a lower risk of flooding.

5.6. Policy 28: The Natural Environment. The application site is currently in agricultural production and, therefore, of limited ecological interest. As per the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain regulations, the proposal is required to achieve at least a 10% post-development enhancement. The statutory metric has been completed, and we are able to provide the necessary enhancement on site. The proposal is, therefore, in accordance with Policy 28.

5.7. There is a high level of archaeological interest on the western side of Spalding. In accordance with Policy 29: Historic Environment applications in sensitive areas must be supported by an appropriate assessment of the impact on heritage issues. Early engagement with the County Council has resulted in agreement that the site will be the subject of geophysical surveying following by a scheme of evaluation in the form of trial trenching. The geophysical surveying is currently underway, and a Written Scheme of Investigation will then be agreed with the County Council. There are no other designated or non-designated heritage assets close to the application site that will be impacted upon by the proposal.

5.8. Policy 30: Pollution. Having regard to the nature of the proposal, we have undertaken a Noise Assessment and this is submitted as part of the planning application. The assessment concludes that there is no detrimental impact arising from the operation of the centre and, therefore, the proposal complies with Policy 30.

5.9. Policy 32: Community, Health and Well-being. The proposal will contribute towards achieving a socially cohesive and inclusive community through the establishment of wider links with a variety of groups throughout the community as set out in paragraphs 3.7 - 3.10. New community uses will be supported provided they are as close as possible to the community they serve, they are readily accessible by public transport, on foot and by bicycle, they are compatible with nearby uses and are located and designed to enable, where possible, shared use with other services. The aim of this proposal it to ensure it is wholly integrated with the local community and, of course, there is an obvious commercial benefit from ensuring this is the case. The proposal is close to the primary school on Pennygate and, in time, the proposal will benefit from the proposed school on Monk House Lane.

5.10. The potential for the proposal to act as a community hub, where local people could meet up to play sports together and socialise, would aid community wellbeing through improving the mental health of those using it. Studies have indicated that engaging in physical activity, as well as social interaction, are key to maintaining good mental health.

6. DESIGN AND ACCESS

Design

6.1. As mentioned in earlier paragraphs, the building needs to be at least 6m to the eaves for Pickleball and 8m to the eaves for Padel. In addition, the interior of the building needs to be open to enable each court to function properly.

6.2. A central entrance into the building will accommodate a hub that will include all the necessary facilities to enable the centre to function, these include a plant room, toilets and changing rooms, a small cafe and servery and a seating area. There will also be a small first floor mezzanine, partly over the ground floor facilities to allow for the viewing of games. The courts are arranged such that the Pickleball courts occupy the western half of the building, with the Padel courts in the eastern half.

6.3. Externally, there is a central, focal, glazed entrance point leading from the car park at the front of the building and there are also strategically placed personnel doors at various points around the building for fire safety purposes. There are no other windows proposed as these are not needed, and the absence of glazing reduces noise emanating from the building.

6.4. The building will be clad in modern metal sheeting, and the use of a two-tone grey finish will assist in breaking up the mass of the elevation to Bourne Road, which will sit behind the existing roadside hedge. A view of the design can be seen below.



6.5. To the front of the building there will be a car parking area with a permeable surface large enough to serve the proposed use. A track around the side of the building will enable service vehicles access to the rear (north). In the northern part of the site, there will be a package treatment plant, a surface water attenuation pond and an area of biodiversity net gain. The boundaries of the site will be delineated with a post and rail fence and tree planting. The existing hedge to the Bourne Road frontage will be retained.

6.6. The design of the building is unashamedly utilitarian, but with a modern touch in the form of the proposed materials, which, overall, is appropriate in this edge of settlement location.

Landscape Impact

6.7. Bourne Road from Pode Hole to the Monks House Lane/Broadway junction forms a transition between open countryside and the town proper. At Pode Hole there is development on both sides of the road and up to the junction with Monks House Lane/Broadway there is a continuous built-up frontage along the southern side of Bourne Road, together with a footway, street furniture and a 40mph speed limit. The character of this part of Bourne Road is predominantly urban and, having regard to the planned development in the area, this urban character will only increase.

6.8. The proposed building is close to and parallel to Bourne Road, which keeps the impact similar to that seen in the vicinity and, having regard to the drop in levels from Bourne Road into the site together with the retention of the roadside hedge, the impact will be largely reduced to that of views of the proposed roofscape.

6.9. Views into the site from Monks House Lane will shortly be altered significantly by the new residential development currently under consideration (and eventually the proposed school).

Transport Statement

6.10. Bourne Road is a wide and well-lit road with good visibility in both directions and is subject to a 40mph speed limit.

6.11. The southern side of Bourne Road has a footway linking Pode Hole with a pedestrian crossing at the Broadway junction with Winsover Road. The

town is easily accessible on foot from the site along the southern side of Bourne Road.

6.12. Early consultation with the local highway authority concluded that the principle of the development in this location was acceptable, subject to detailed consideration.

6.13. An existing field access into the site will be upgraded to Lincolnshire County Council standards.

6.14. There will be 10 full-time members of staff, and a maximum of 32 people can play at any one time. There will be the inevitable cross-over between games and so, at a maximum, there will most likely be up to 60 people on site. During the day, attendance levels will be lower than evenings and so the attendance levels on site will vary. The premises will be open from 7am to 11pm, 7 days a week.

6.15. Some of those attending the site will inevitably car share and so vehicle movements to and from the site will also vary throughout the day.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1. It is proposed to construct a Padel and Pickleball centre in response to the significant rise in popularity of these accessible and inclusive racquet sports.

7.2. The Bourne Road site is close to the settlement boundary and within walking distance of the main residential areas of the town.

7.3. A review of reasonable available sites within the settlement boundary reveals that of the few that are available, none are suitable or meet the requirements of the project.

7.4. The western side of the town is seeing significant housing development, and the allocated school site and proposed relief road will see further change in the coming years.

7.5. The proposal will contribute to the health and wellbeing of the community and add to the sporting provision within the town.

7.6. When measured against the prevailing policies in the development plan, the proposal is acceptable and when exercising the planning balance the location of the proposal just beyond the settlement boundary is also acceptable.

APPENDIX A

Letters from the Lawn Tennis Association and Pickleball England

Tom Mapp
Delivery Manager
Lawn Tennis Association

18/08/2025

Dear Sir / Madam

RE: Support for Padel & Pickle Ball Installation

I am writing to formally express my strong support for the proposed padel and pickle ball installation to the west of Spalding along the Bourne Road (52°46.89762'N, 0°10.99062'W)

This initiative aligns closely with the Lawn Tennis Association's (LTA) strategic priority to develop strong, healthy communities through accessible, inclusive sports opportunities.

Padel is a rapidly growing sport that appeals to people across all ages and abilities, providing an excellent platform to encourage physical activity and social engagement within the local community. The chosen location near Spalding will enable widespread access, fostering inclusion and bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds.

This development promises to enhance local sports provision and promote wellbeing, contributing positively to the quality of life for residents. I fully endorse this project and the significant community benefits it will deliver.

Yours sincerely,
Tom Mapp
LTA Delivery Manager

PickleballEngland
The Oaks, The Street, Selmeston, East Sussex BN26 6UD
[redacted]@pickleballengland.org [redacted]
https://www.pickleballengland.org
@pickleballengland

14th September 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing on behalf of Pickleball England to express our strong support for the development of the proposed new **pickleball and padel facility** installation to the west of Spalding along the Bourne Road (52°46.89762'N, 0°10.99062'W).

Pickleball England is the national governing body for pickleball in England, and we represent a fast-growing community of players, clubs, coaches, and volunteers across the country. We are at a critical inflection point in our growth. Over the past few years, we have seen an exponential rise in interest in pickleball. This demand has been met largely through the adaptation of existing multi-use spaces – leisure centres, tennis courts, community halls – which have been instrumental in supporting the sport's initial development.

However, for pickleball to continue its upward trajectory and to fully realise its potential, we now need a new generation of **dedicated, purpose-built or converted facilities**. These facilities not only meet the specific needs of the sport, but also foster community engagement, provide consistent access for players of all ages and abilities, and enable clubs to thrive and grow.

The few independent pickleball facilities that have already launched in this country have demonstrated just how powerful this model can be. They have quickly become **vibrant community hubs**, drawing in new participants, offering high-quality coaching and social play, and hosting competitive events. With demand continuing to outstrip supply, there is an urgent need to scale this success by enabling the creation of many more such venues.
We also support the inclusion of **padel** alongside pickleball, recognising the shared appeal and complementary nature of both sports. Together, they offer compelling opportunities to attract diverse audiences, encourage physical activity, and enhance the local sporting landscape.

We therefore strongly support the proposed development and encourage planners, funders, and stakeholders to recognise the **significant sporting, social, and health benefits** it will deliver.

If we can provide any further information or data to support your application, we would be happy to do so.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Karen Mitchell
Chair & Co-Founder
Pickleball England

rdc
Robert Doughty
Consultancy

A design consultancy specialising in Town and Country Planning, Landscape Architecture and Architecture

Chartered Town Planners | Chartered Landscape Architects