



Town & Country Planning Act 1990

Planning Design and Access Statement

**Creation of Padel Courts and Associated Café (Class E) with
associated infrastructure**

Ivy House Farm, Broad Lane, Markfield, LE67 9TB

Prepared on behalf of Mr Cade, Ivy House Café & Padel Ltd

July 2026

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APPENDICES

- 1. Sport England Response to Application 25/0554/FUL:
Padel court at Old Smithsonians Rugby Football Club,
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- 2. Letter of Support from Lawn Tennis Association**
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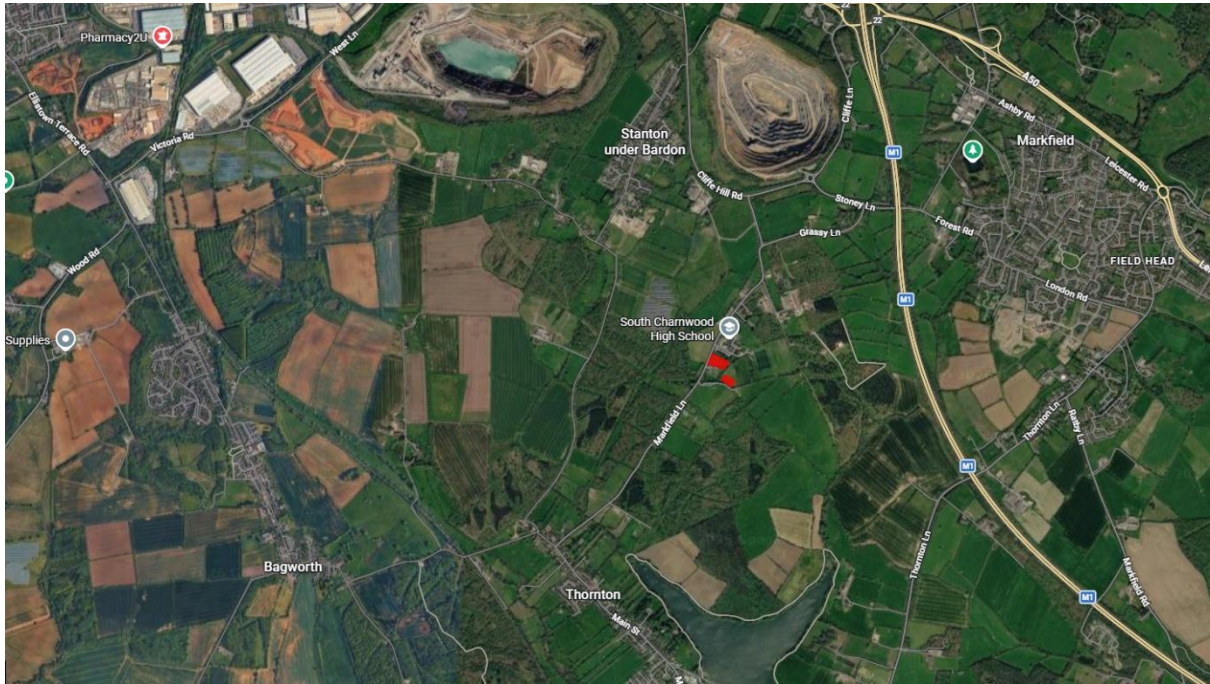
1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this Planning, Design and Access Statement is to support a planning application for the construction of four outdoor padel courts, conversion of a barn with extensions and alterations into a café, and provision of associated infrastructure on land at Ivy House Farm, Markfield.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Statement is to review the prevailing planning policies, along with any other material considerations that are relevant to the determination of this planning application and to provide a case for granting planning permission. It fulfils the requirements of Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 in respect of such Statements.
- 1.3 This Statement is written in conjunction with a Highways Report from Edwards and Edwards Consultancy Ltd and ecological information from Alca Ecology Ltd. Letters of support for the facility are also provided by the Lawn Tennis Association and South Charnwood High School.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION AND SURROUNDING AREA

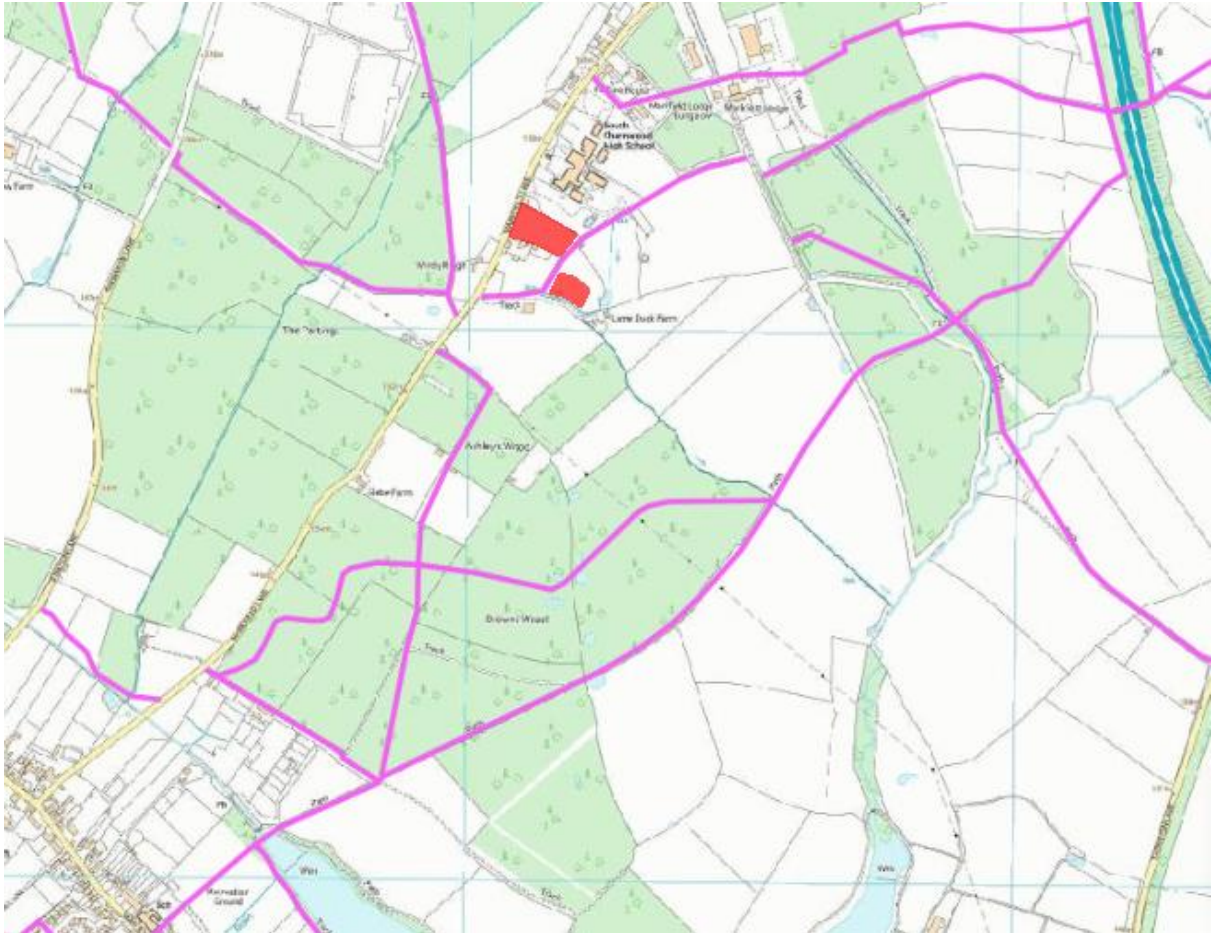
- 2.1 The application site consists of two areas of land currently forming part of grassland areas associated with Ivy House Farm. Although the address notes the site as Markfield, it is located between the settlements of Markfield, Stanton under Bardon and Thornton. It forms part of a cluster of development on Broad Lane, with a number of houses, South Charnwood High School, the Tithe Green Natural Burial ground and numerous employment units.
- 2.2 The northern part extends to 0.59 ha and is located adjacent to Broad Lane, and is juxtaposed to Ivy House Farmhouse and the South Charnwood High School/the former caretaker's lodge. It forms an area land grazed by horses, with a set of small

stables/storage buildings along the south-western edge. These provide a typical corrugated sheet agricultural barn and a smaller timber stable building. The main barn is finished dark grey and in a decent condition, whilst the stables are in a relatively poor condition. The land gently slopes towards the south and is largely enclosed by hedges.



Location Plan – application site highlighted in red

- 2.3 The southern parcel of land extends to 0.51 ha and forms part of the rear field. This is enclosed by trees and hedges along the southern and western boundaries but is undefined to the north and east, with it forming part of a larger field.
- 2.4 These two land parcels form part of a larger holding, incorporating the farmhouse, plus additional land to the south-west and east of the northern parcel. Between the two application sections of land, there is a public right of way that crosses the holding in a north-east/south-west direction (route R28/1). It connects with Broad Lane to the south of the site and extends onto Markfield to the north-east. There are a number of linking footpaths in the area which are regularly used as part of longer loop walks associated with the reservoir and neighbouring settlements.



Footpath map of area; footpaths are denoted by the pink lines and the site in red



Photograph of site looking north-west towards Broad Lane



Photograph of site looking east

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Application Site

- 3.1 There is no history of relevance to the application site.

Other Relevant Planning Applications

Padel Court Applications across Leicestershire

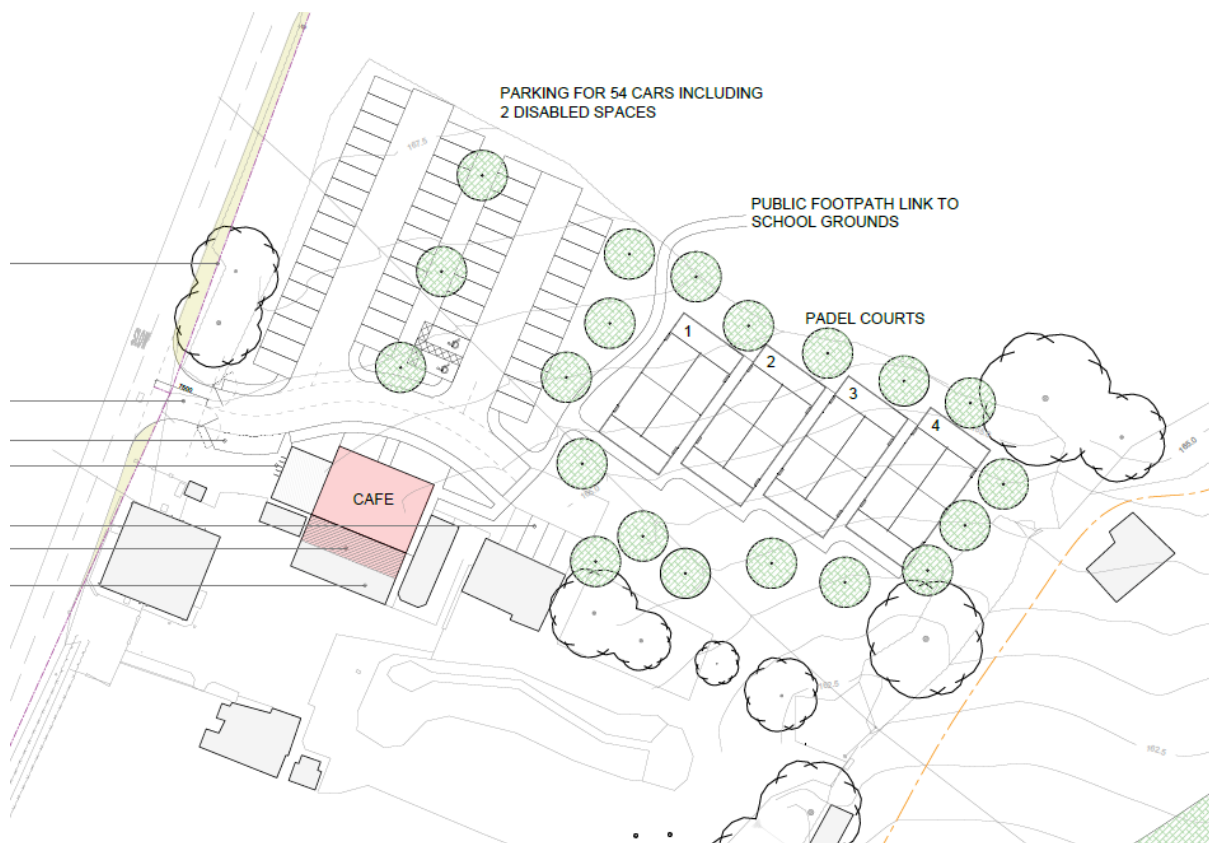
- 3.2 Planning consents across Leicestershire are very limited for padel courts. Within Hinckley and Bosworth Borough, it is limited to application 25/01137/FUL for the conversion of an agricultural barn at Hoo Hills Farm, Bosworth Road, Wellsborough. This is located in a rural location, 4.5km west of Market Bosworth. This provides three courts (2x doubles; 1x singles) and an associated retail unit within a converted farm building.

- 3.3 This application was approved on 13 February 2026, with the Officer's report noting the proposal to represent diversification of a rural enterprise, as well as delivering a sporting facility with only limited visual harm, which was considered to significantly outweigh the unsustainable nature of the site.
- 3.4 Across the remainder of Leicestershire, the following Padel clubs are operating/have been approved:
- 170 Broome Lane, East Goscote, LE7 3WQ (Charnwood BC): 4 courts [Application P/25/1439/2]
 - The Rally Hub Fields, Beeby, Barkby Rd, Beeby, Leicester LE7 1BQ (Harborough DC): 1 court [Application 19/01497/FUL]
 - Squash Club, Fairfield Road, Market Harborough, LE16 9 QH (Harborough DC): 2 courts
 - Manor Padel Club, Tur Langton, Leicester, LE8 0PJ: 1 court
 - 161B Barkby Road, Leicester, LE4 9LG (Leicester City): 4 courts inc. 1 single [Application 20252033 – limited period consent]
 - Grace Dieu Manor Park, Thringstone, LE67 5UG (North West Leics. BC): 1 court

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 This proposal seeks a change of use of paddock land to 4 padel courts with an associated café, access and car parking, plus new landscaping and a biodiversity net gain (BNG) area.
- 4.2 The land is divided into two parcels. The north-western parcel is the development plot, whilst the south-eastern parcel is the BNG area.
- 4.3 The site will be accessed via a new gated vehicular access onto Broad Lane. This will provide 95 x 2.4m visibility splays in both directions. The access will lead to 54 car parking

spaces, including two disabled spaces. A delivery bay is also provided adjacent to the café. Racking for five cycles is also provided, along with pedestrian links to the school grounds to the north and to the public right of way to the east of the site. It is intended that some of the parking spaces will be made available for use by the school at drop of and pick up times, as the facility will have low parking requirements at these times and it will address some of the known highway safety issues on Broad Lane as a result of extensive parking demand in association with the school.



Proposed site layout

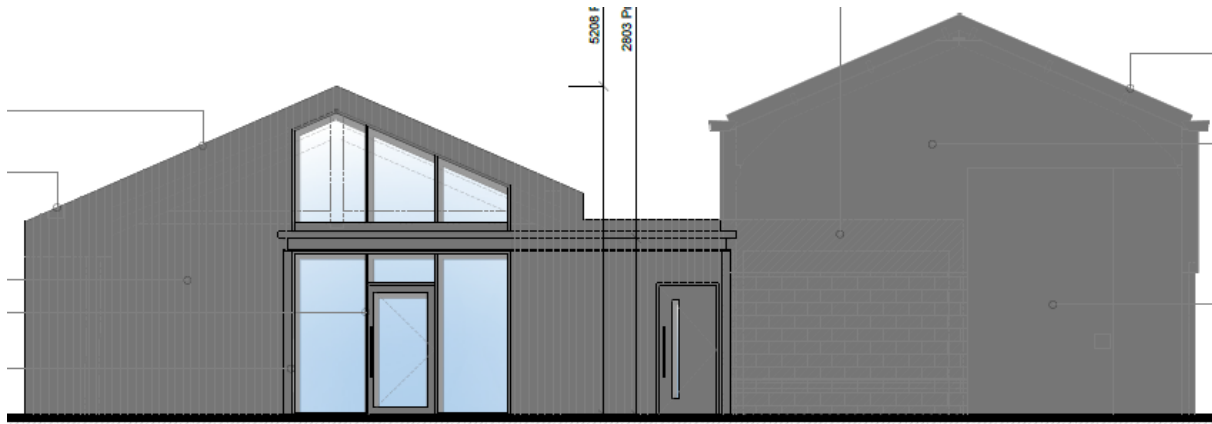
- 4.4 The parking is provided on the north-western part of the site, with the four padel courts provided on the north-eastern part. These are set adjacent to each other, and positioned to align with the ground. Level access (step free) is provided into each court, allowing full accessibility for all. The courts are all double courts 10m wide by 20m long. These will be enclosed by glass walls 3.0m in height with metal mesh fencing for a further 1m at the ends of the court; these heights align with approved court regulations for padel. Lighting columns will be provided at 5.9m high and operational only as necessary whilst the court is in use.



Illustration of proposed padel court and enclosure

- 4.5 The café will be operated alongside the padel courts but be available for use by the general public. It will be created through use of half the existing barn which will contain the kitchen and preparation areas, storage and toilets. A modest sized flue will project through the roof of the existing barn to serve the kitchen. The remainder of the barn will be retained in association with the adjacent dwelling as storage. The stables will be removed and a new extension constructed onto the north-eastern elevation to create the seating area for the café. Providing 50 covers, the extension is 10.0m deep and 13.6m wide.
- 4.6 The front extension to the barn is designed as a lower barn than the existing structure, providing a ridge at 5.2m and eaves at 3.5m. A flat roof section at 2.8m with a parapet at 3.0m concealing a flat roof then links the two pitched roof sections. These will be finished in black charred timber cladding, with a zinc standing seam panel roof. Black powder coated aluminium windows and doors are proposed, with sets of glazing provided to the north-east and north-west elevations, set between supporting posts to the structure.

Rooflights are included in the north-eastern elevation, along with PV panels. An air source heat pump is concealed on the central elevation of the existing barn, above the flat roof link.



Proposed side elevation of café, showing the existing barn and proposed extension

- 4.7 A covered area is proposed to the side of the barn, finished in black cladding. This will provide coded lockers to enable rental of padel racquets and balls, along with drinks and snack vending machines in order to offer refreshments outside of café opening times.
- 4.8 The padel courts will be bookable via a national online system for hourly slots between 0700 – 2200 daily. The café is intending to operate within the hours of 0800 – 2000. The online booking system and locker approach enables the courts to be useable when the café is not staffed.
- 4.9 The second land parcel forms the biodiversity enhancement area. This will provide sustainable grazing with new tree planting and improved grassland provided. Additional landscaping will also be provided across the padel/café site, with additional hedging and tree planting.
- 4.10 The driveway will be provided as a tarmacadam surface, with gravel parking delineated by block paviours. The hardstanding will predominantly be permeable.



Proposed site layout

5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1 The starting point for assessing development proposals is always the Development Plan. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states *“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 relevant Development Plan for this proposal consists of the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Core Strategy (2009) and Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (2016). There is no Neighbourhood Plan covering the application site. In

addition, the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is an important material consideration for determining planning applications.

Development Plan

- 5.3 The adopted proposals map identifies the application site as being within the countryside and National Forest/Charnwood Forest; the site is however close to Thornton, a key rural centre. The site is also within Flood Zone 1. The Development Plan covers the period to March 2026, so is now time expired. It has also not been subjected to the five yearly review as noted as being required by the NPPF.

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Core Strategy (2009)

- 5.4 Spatial objectives 6 (infrastructure provision) and 7 (healthier active communities) are relevant to this proposal, with it recognised that additional infrastructure may well be required as part of developments and the importance of ensuring the provision of and access to new sport/leisure facilities.
- 5.5 The following policies are relevant to this proposal.
- 5.6 **Policy 10 (Key Rural Centres within the National Forest)** seeks to improve the provision of facilities to Bagworth and Thornton. This includes the provision of new homes employment and community/leisure facilities. Opportunities are noted to include the delivery of the strategic green infrastructure network (Policy 20) to improve access and tourism in the area. Reference is also made to delivering safe cycle routes, including from Thornton to Charnwood High Street.
- 5.7 **Policy 14 (Rural Areas: Transport)** seeks to support accessibility within the rural areas. This includes the support of bus services and delivering cycle paths to provide safe routes to schools, residential and employment areas, community and leisure facilities.
- 5.8 **Policy 20 (Green Infrastructure)** identifies the implementation of the Green

Infrastructure Network as a key priority of the Council. For the North-Eastern Zone (which includes the application site), this is noted to include:

- Continue to develop relationships with the National Forest, Stepping Stones Project and the Charnwood Forest to enable the continued implementation of these initiatives.
- Protect existing access routes and create physical connections between settlements and the National Forest and Charnwood Forest areas to increase the potential for tourism income and protect existing assets from possible overuse as a result of growth within and outside the borough.

5.9 **Policy 21 (National Forest)** outlines the need to provide additional tree planting in line with the National Forest Strategy. Development should respect the character and appearance of the wider countryside.

5.10 **Policy 22 (Charnwood Forest)** states that proposals will be supported that provide new recreation facilities and involve rural diversification and sustainable tourism.

*Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Site Allocations and Development Management Policies
DPD (adopted 2016)*

5.11 The following policies are relevant to this submission.

5.12 **Policy DM1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)** notes that applications that accord with the policies in the Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Borough Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.13 **Policy DM4 (Safeguarding the Countryside and Settlement Separation)** states that in

order to protect the intrinsic value, beauty, open character and landscape character of the countryside, it will be safeguarded from unsustainable development. Development in the countryside will be considered sustainable in a number of instances, including where it is for outdoor sport or recreation purposes (including ancillary buildings) and it can be demonstrated that the proposed scheme cannot be provided within or adjacent to settlement boundaries.

5.14 **Policy DM6 (Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geological Interest)** identifies that proposals must demonstrate how they conserve and enhance features of nature conservation and geological value, including biodiversity net gains and the long-term future management of any areas.

5.15 **Policy DM10 (Development and Design)** states that development will be permitted providing that the following requirements are met:

- a) It would not have a significant adverse effect on the privacy and amenity of nearby residents and occupiers of adjacent buildings, including matters of lighting, air quality (including odour), noise, vibration and visual intrusion;
- b) The amenity of occupiers of the proposed development would not be adversely affected by activities in the vicinity of the site;
- c) It complements or enhances the character of the surrounding area with regard to scale, layout, density, mass, design, materials and architectural features;
- d) The use and application of building materials respects the materials of existing, adjoining/neighbouring buildings and the local area generally;
- e) It incorporates a high standard of landscaping where this would add to the quality of the design and siting;
- f) It maximises opportunities for the conservation of energy and resources through design, layout, orientation and construction;
- g) Where parking is to be provided charging points for electric or low emission vehicles are included where feasible;
- h) An appropriate Sustainable Drainage Scheme is submitted to and approved by the relevant Authority. Schemes should incorporate wildlife areas, ponds, swales and permeable paving where appropriate;

- i) It maximises natural surveillance and incorporates the principles of Secured by Design and has considered the incorporation of fire safety measures.

5.16 **Policy DM15 (Redundant Rural Buildings)** indicates that the reuse of redundant/disused rural buildings in the countryside will be supported where:

- a) The applicant demonstrates the building is no longer viable in its current use; and
- b) The applicant has adequately demonstrated the building is in a structurally sound condition and is capable of conversion without significant rebuild or alteration; and
- c) Any proposed extension(s) or alterations are proportionate to the size, scale, mass and footprint of the original building and situated within the original curtilage; and
- d) The proposed development accords with Policy DM10: Development and Design and relevant design guidance, DM11: Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment and DM12: Heritage Assets.

5.17 All development proposals for the re-use of redundant rural buildings should result in the enhancement of the immediate setting.

5.18 **Policy DM17 (Highways and Transportation)** outlines that proposals will be supported where they seek to make the best use of existing public transport services, ensure convenient and safe access for walking and cycling to the facility and demonstrate that there is not a significant adverse impact upon highway. Developments should be located where the need to travel is minimised and sustainable transport modes maximised.

5.19 **Policy DM18 (Vehicle Parking Standards)** highlights that all proposals should incorporate an appropriate level of parking provision, justified by an assessment.

5.20 **Policy DM21 (Locating Sustainable Town Centre Uses)** notes that all applications for town centre uses will be required to adhere to the sequential approach of town/district/local centre first, followed by edge of centre and finally out of centre. Proposals not within a town/district/local centre will need to be accompanied by a sequential assessment. Out of centre sites will only be considered in a number of instances including a proposal for small scale rural development.

- 5.21 **Policy DM25 (Community Facilities)** states that new community facilities across the Borough will be supported. These should be located in order to reduce the reliance on the private car and positioned so that they are accessible to the community they will serve.

Other Material Policy Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024 with February 2025 updates)

- 5.22 Paragraph 2 confirms that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 5.23 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development including the provision of homes. Paragraph 8 identifies three overarching objectives to sustainable development as being economic, social and environmental. These matters are considered mutually supportive and, therefore, to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought simultaneously. Paragraph 11 sets out the need to approve developments that accord with the development plan without delay; where policy is absent/out of date, proposals should be granted unless the harms would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 5.24 Paragraph 39 encourages Local Planning Authorities to approach decisions on proposed developments in a positive and creative way, with decision makers at every level seeking to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 5.25 Chapter 6 covers the economy. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each

area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.

- 5.26 Chapter 7 sets out the Government's position to protect the vitality of town centres. Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered (paragraph 91). When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre (paragraph 92).
- 5.27 Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interactions, are safe and accessible and enable and support healthy lives (paragraph 96). Paragraph 103 continues to explain that access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.
- 5.28 Chapter 9 covers promotion of sustainable transport. Development should be directed towards the most sustainable locations, and promotion of walking, cycling and public transport use should occur (paragraph 109). Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios (paragraph 116).

- 5.29 Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions (paragraph 124).
- 5.30 Section 12 of the NPPF aims to achieve well-designed places. Planning policies and decisions should ensure developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive and sympathetic to the built environment and setting, whilst achieving a high standard of amenity for existing and future users (paragraph 135). Significant weight should be given to developments which reflect local design policies and Government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance such as design guides and codes (paragraph 139).

6. PLANNING JUSTIFICATION

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 This proposal seeks to convert part of an existing horsicultural holding to provide outdoor padel courts and an associated café and supporting infrastructure. The existing grazing of horses on the land will be transferred onto other land within the holding, outside of the application site (see location plan for land edged blue).
- 6.2 There are a number of distinct elements to consider, given the policy position. I set these out as follows:
- Specialist requirements of Padel courts
 - Need for leisure facilities
 - Location of the facility (including sequential location)
 - Accessibility

Specialist Requirements of Padel Courts

- 6.3 The planning system is very constrained as to how the uses align with the Development Plan; no specific allocations are made for new leisure facilities. It is assumed that traditional open space and sports facilities are integrated as part of new housing developments; all other proposals are essentially left for consideration through planning applications.
- 6.4 The delivery of padel facilities is subject to extremely specific spatial, operational and technical requirements. This affects both internal and external courts, which substantially restrict the number of suitable sites capable of accommodating the development. These constraints are materially different from many traditional leisure or recreational uses as padel courts cannot be integrated into multi-use game areas. The need for specialist court enclosures, dividing structures, circulation space and precise dimensional requirements for each court means that they cannot be integrated into such areas. Each full-size doubles court requires a minimum operational footprint of approximately 20 metres by 10 metres, in addition to surrounding circulation and access space necessary for safe operation. This means that the ability to deliver the facilities within existing sports areas is limited; this is not assisted by Sport England objecting to such proposals where it removes existing open space (see objection to Application 25/0554/FUL at The Old Smithsonians Ground, Blaby – [Appendix 1](#)).
- 6.5 Outdoor facilities are also constrained by the need to face other challenges including drainage requirements, site levelling, biodiversity net gain considerations, flood risk, lighting impacts, visual impacts, noise considerations and weather protection requirements.
- 6.6 These inherent locational constraints are highly material and help explain why padel provision remains significantly underrepresented despite rapidly growing demand. They also reinforce why opportunities to deliver padel facilities are relatively rare and should carry substantial weight within the planning balance.

- 6.7 The matters noted above are integrated into the consideration below, as there will always be a policy conflict in respect of the delivery of such facilities. This is an inherent failure with the current planning system. These matters are considered under the following headings.

Need for Leisure Facilities

- 6.8 Padel has been the fastest growing sport in the UK in recent years, with the number of players more than doubling year on year in England:

Year	Number of Padel players*
2023	129,000
2024	400,000
2025	860,000

Source: www.ltapadel.org.uk

* Noted to be playing at least once a week

- 6.9 As of February 2026, there were 1,004 Padel Courts available (Source: www.ltapadel.org.uk), but with a notable urban-focus in terms of their locations; particularly towards Birmingham, Manchester and London. The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) govern the sport and anticipate that there will be 1,300 courts by the end of 2026, with the LTA investing over £6 million into facilities and awareness of the sport. The continued growth of this sport needs to be recognised and catered for accordingly within facilities available. Its popularity has been attributed to the ability to play it without requiring the same level of skill as other racket sports such as tennis.
- 6.10 In terms of the deficit of courts within Leicestershire, it is highlighted that there are only three courts within all of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough at present, provided in a single location to the far west of the Borough. A letter of support for this proposal from the LTA (see *Appendix 2*) notes that in total there are only 9 courts across the whole of Leicestershire and that a minimum of 8 courts should be provided within Hinckley and

Bosworth, and 77 courts across the City and County. This represents a shortfall at both the Borough and City/County level. This confirms the need for additional facilities within the area.

- 6.11 The majority of the Padel Courts (90% of padel clubs) are booked via an online system called Playtomic. Review of the situation in Leicestershire by Alan Douglas, Regional Manager for the UK and Ireland at Playtomic stated that:

“In January 2026 there were 47,300 active user sessions within the Leicester and Leicestershire catchment area. Notably, this level of activity exists despite there being no existing padel clubs in Leicester, which clearly demonstrates a strong underlying demand for a facility in the area.”

- 6.12 It is clear from this statement that there is a sizable unmet need for padel within the Leicester and Leicestershire area, which can only be met through provision of additional facilities spread across the county. This proposal would provide one such facility to meet the extensive and growing need.

Location of the Facility

- 6.13 Aligning the location of the development with the specific objectives of this proposal needs to be considered as part of the overall approach to the location of this facility. The application site is located specifically to enable a number of aspects of the proposal to be delivered. These relate to the ability to link together the proximity of the site to South Charnwood High School, the public rights of way as part of circular routes within the wider area of Thornton Reservoir and the lacuna of padel and café facilities in this area.
- 6.14 There are no facilities within this part of Leicestershire, with the closest being at Wellsborough to the far west of the county and at Thringstone to the north of Coalville; both are more than 15km away. These provide only three and one courts respectively, representing a significantly low number of courts to serve the whole west side of Leicestershire. The majority as outlined below are located to the east or south-east of

Leicester, creating travel distances in excess of 20km to these facilities. The one within Leicester at Barkby Road is still 18.7km away and likely to take longer to reach due to the lower travel speeds and greater congestion in the city. These issues all illustrate that there is a need for facilities in a location that can serve a wider area; wherever it is located it would serve a reasonable geographical area and thus the selected location is always going to generate transport movements.

Padel Club Location	Travel distance from Application site
Hoo Hills Farm, Bosworth Road, Wellsborough	15.8km away to the south-west
Grace Dieu Manor Park, Thringstone	15.3km away to the north
161B Barkby Road, Leicester	18.7km away to the east (once it opens)
170 Broome Lane, East Goscote	23.4km away to the east
The Rally Hub Fields, Beeby, Barkby Rd, Beeby	24.6km away to the east
Manor Padel Club, Tur Langton	31.3km away to the south-east
Squash Club, Fairfield Road, Market Harborough	37.0km away to the south-east

6.15 This specific location has the benefit of being able to link the facility with the adjacent South Charnwood High School. This is an educational facility that highly values and promotes sports, reflecting its various sporting facilities, including a multi-use games area. The facilities are also used by external sports clubs in the evenings and at weekends resulting in it being a hub of activity for sporting purposes every day of the week.

6.16 Communication with the school has already been undertaken, with strong support provided by the Headteacher Simon Andrews – see [Appendix 3](#). It is intended that the facility is physically connected with the school through a direct footpath using a route agreed with the school's headteacher. This will be provided within the application site by the applicant, whilst the element on the school site would be provided by the educational authority (this has been indicated to be deliverable by the school without the need to

remove any trees/mature vegetation). This will allow the following benefits to be offered to the school/school site:

- Use of the padel courts at a free/discounted rate for the pupils and staff;
- Ability to book the courts to align with staff lunchtimes;
- Access to the café as a food/drink retail option, including to out-of-school activities where long periods outside in inclement weather often occurs for parents;
- Scope for linked use of padel facility whilst dependents are undertaking out-of-school activities; and
- Scope to provide drop off spaces/parking for school am/pm peaks, as this does not align with key activity periods of the padel courts/café; school traffic is recognised as a highway safety concern that has not been able to be resolved so any enhancement to this should be recognised as a significant benefit (see access and parking section below for more detail).

6.17 These benefits can only be delivered if the site is adjacent to the school.

6.18 The location of the site also allows the facility to link to the public footpath. This passes to the south-east of the site, across the applicant's land. There is an existing gated access from the site onto the footpath, which can be utilised to provide access to this well-used circular walking/running route. Forming part of the tourist route in the area, as well as a dog-walking route and exercise route within the area, it links Thornton Reservoir/Thornton with Stanton under Bardon and Markfield. The inclusion of a café in this location can therefore provide a triplicate use to serve the padel courts, the school and the users of the footpath.

6.19 The site therefore offers a unique opportunity to deliver sporting and retail facilities, enabling access on foot to the walking and tourist community, linked journeys for use in association with the school, and only short vehicular journeys for people specifically coming to use the padel courts.

- 6.20 The Development Plan supports the growth of leisure and tourist facilities within the countryside. This includes opportunities to enhance the facilities for Bagworth and Thornton (Policy 10), enhance the relationships between tourism and the Charnwood Forest (Policies 20 and 22) and the provision of outdoor sports and recreational facilities (Policy DM4). Additional planting and biodiversity enhancement augments the overall quality of this environment, particularly from the public footpath, whilst the café will also be partially created through conversion of an existing building, aligning with Policy DM15.
- 6.21 It is however recognised that there are elements of the proposal which ideally should be located in town centres, and/or edge of centre/settlement. As already stated, the provision of padel courts within existing open space/leisure facilities is resisted by Sports England as they do not wish to see the current offer of other facilities reduced. The ability to find suitable and available land within / adjacent to retail centres for padel courts is therefore completely unrealistic. The ability to provide them even within any settlement will always be limited, given land values and pressure for development; the emerging Local Plan for instance recognises the need for extensive new development on green field land beyond the limits to development. The difficulty to provide them within existing settlements is reflected by the only facility within Hinckley and Bosworth being within a former agricultural barn away from any settlement. The situation for the padel courts is essentially no different here, with the justification for their specific location set out above.
- 6.22 In terms of the café, in order to secure the necessary benefits, it needs to be located along-side the padel courts, public footpath and school in order to deliver the benefits envisaged. It cannot be disaggregated from the padel courts without reducing the quality of the padel facility proposed. The function of the café would be entirely changed if it was located within a settlement rather than on the public footpath route. The overall scale of the café is also below the 250 sqm threshold to require any impact testing; it is also commensurate to the scale expected for such a facility.
- 6.23 The location of the site, given the specific justification should be considered to accord with the intentions of policy in respect of where new leisure, retail and tourist facilities can be located.

Accessibility

6.24 Paragraph 110 of the NPPF states:

“The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.”

6.25 This proposal is not a significant development, but the intention to locate new infrastructure where it is easily accessible is noted to still be a relevant consideration. Paragraph 110 recognises the need to provide ‘realistic alternatives’ to the car through sustainable transport options, which the glossary defines as journeys on foot, bicycle and public transport. Reducing journeys and linked trips are also a relevant consideration, particularly within more rural areas.

6.26 Manual for Streets 1 (para 4.4) states that ‘walkable neighbourhoods’ are reflected by facilities being within 800 metres but recognises that journeys on foot can be up to 2.0 kilometres in some instances. It is this higher figure that is noted as being the upper limit for walking.

6.27 The application site is located 1.1km away from Thornton Reservoir and 1.3km from Thornton village. It is approximately 1.6km from the edge of Markfield and 1.15km from Stanton under Bardon. All of these locations are within walking distance, using unmade public footpaths. It is recognised that this may not be suitable for all persons and/or less accessible during the winter months, but it does represent a realistic option for reaching the café in particular. Most people using these paths would be undertaking recreational walks for tourist purposes (from Thornton reservoir) or for exercise / dog walking purposes

(from the villages) and thus the unmade surface of the rights of way would not be a barrier to their use.

- 6.28 The Department for Transport's Local Transport Note 1/20: Cycle Infrastructure Design (2020) recognises the importance of cycling as part of a wider network of connected journeys. It recognises that opportunities are reduced beyond the urban areas, but notes that most cycle journeys are up to 5 miles (8km) (figure 2.1). This travel distance has not been altered through this latest publication, replacing LTN 1/08 which set out the same distances. Historically, people have therefore been willing to travel this distance to facilities for the last 20+ years.
- 6.29 The site is located within 1km of National Cycle Route 63, illustrating that the local highways are not only safe for cyclists, but actively promoted for this mode of transport. An 8km radius of the site would include Ratby, Kirby Muxloe, Newbold Verdon, Barlestone, Ibstock, Coalville and Woodhouse Eaves all within cycling distance, as well as the intervening smaller settlements. This provides opportunity for access to the facility from much of the rural areas between the urban edges of Leicester, Coalville and Hinckley. Cycling is a realistic opportunity for a number of potential users of both the café and padel courts.
- 6.30 In terms of access to public transport, this is often limited or completely absent from rural areas. In this instance, as outlined within the Edwards and Edwards report, there is a bus stop 150m away on Broad Lane. This provides a bus roughly once every two hours between Leicester and Coalville via Anstey, Markfield, Stanton under Bardon, Ellistown and Hugglescote (route LC15). Although not ideal in terms of its frequency of provision, it does offer opportunity for access to the facility via public transport.
- 6.31 Overall there is scope for access to the facility from the wider area by a range of walking, cycling and public transport. The site, given its rural location, should be considered sustainable for the proposed development. Additionally, the intended location of the site adjacent to the school illustrates the ability for linked trips to be undertaken for activities, in association with either collecting/dropping children at school, or out-of-school activity

clubs. This would result in no additional travel distances for some of the future users, whilst the extensive travel distances to other padel facilities means that journey's within this part of Leicestershire would be notably reduced. These matters should be considered positively in support of the proposal from a sustainability perspective, in accordance with the Development Plan policy and the NPPF.

HIGHWAYS AND ACCESS

- 6.32 A Transport Statement has been prepared by Edwards and Edwards. This illustrates that the proposal will provide a policy compliant, safe access that delivers the full visibility splays.
- 6.33 The internal layout delivers parking levels for cars (including disabled spaces), bicycles and delivery vehicles to meet the needs of the facility. It has also been designed to assist in the quantum of available parking to meet the drop-off and pick-up demand for the adjacent South Charnwood High School. These parking peaks for the school would coincide with quiet periods for the padel club and café, allowing many of the vehicles that currently block the public highway to be redirected off the highway. The new access would also provide enhanced visibility splays compared to the current drop-off area associated with the school. A safe route from the parking area into the school will be provided. This arrangement would significantly enhance the known issues in respect of the operation of the school to the benefit of highway safety for all. This enhancement will occur whilst the road is the subject of a 20mph restriction (due to proximity to the school), further ensuring a safe access is delivered to support the educational facility.
- 6.34 The site itself is designed to be a step-free environment, ensuring full disability compliance for access to the courts and café. The scheme should be considered to accord with Policy 14 of the Core Strategy, Policy DM17 and 18 of the SAMDP and the NPPF.

LAYOUT AND DESIGN

- 6.35 The scheme seeks to offer a logical arrangement of the facilities on site, separating the café, car park and padel courts to protect the safety of all areas, along with routes into the spaces and existing vegetation of value, which is largely retained. The new access is positioned to avoid all trees and the boundary vegetation will be trimmed to allow the visibility splays to be maintained. All other boundary hedges will be retained, with additional planting included to create a secure site. Gated access to all entrances will then be provided.
- 6.36 The main car parking area is positioned close to Broad Lane, minimising the quantum of hardstanding necessary and allowing it to be rationalised into one section, enabling access from the school and public right of way without traversing the parking area. This maximises the safety of all users of the site, with the screens around the padel courts ensuring balls are kept within the courts. The open appearance of the padel courts, with their glass screens and green astroturf courts also provide minimal visual impact for the south-eastern half of the development, protecting the openness of the countryside. The additional tree and hedgerow planting will also add to the verdant appearance of the site as a whole, including within the parking area to break up the perceived level of hardstanding and visibility of the vehicles from beyond the site.
- 6.37 The enlarged buildings for the café are retained within the building cluster already present at Ivy House Farm. This includes the house itself, plus the various outbuildings, barns and stables. The floor area / footprint will be increased but the building remains modest in its overall scale, with the design approach seeking to reinforce this appearance. The delivery of the café as two connected barns by a flat roof element reduces the mass and allows the proportions of each element to reflect that of such barns. The connecting flat roof element is also commensurate to that of the timber stables to be removed.



Existing barn to be converted; existing stables to be removed are commensurate in scale to the flat roof element of the replacement structure

6.38 The existing barn to be converted will be retained as built without any notable changes, with scope for its conversion given the underutilised function of the space for storage in association with the adjacent residential property. The existing external materials will be retained but be repainted to offer a more continuous and attractive appearance. The kitchen and supporting spaces will be provided within the existing barn, allowing the café seating to be provided in the more illuminated new-build elements, given the glazing and rooflights proposed. The integration of the kitchen into the original element also allows the flue to be largely concealed within the building, whilst the small external element will be largely screened by the new front barn.

6.39 The new section of the building echoes the form of the existing barn, but provides a lower ridgeline to reduce its overall mass. The use of charred black timber and window frames allows it to visually integrate into the existing building cluster, which have similar dark finishes. This also ensures that the buildings do not appear visually prominent in any longer views from beyond the site. The front elevation of the new barn has been designed to emphasise its use as a café, but with the appearance of a converted structure. The glazing elements are arranged around the vertical structural supports of the building, offering a regimented design, creating both vertical and horizontal emphasis to the

structure. The alignment of the timber cladding and standing seam roof then augment the vertical emphasis, tying the aspects together. The limited palate of the building and the clean building lines, including concealed guttering offers an understated building that is reflective of its countryside location.

- 6.40 Although set away from defined settlement boundaries, the site is set within a cluster of other buildings, including housing, a school and employment units. Any visibility of the building, car parking and padel courts is therefore seen within this context. The retention and augmentation of the vegetation on the site ensures that a decent level of screening will be provided from the outset. The additional tree and hedge planting will then assist in further filtering any views across the site, as well as towards the other surrounding buildings. The topography and established woodland clusters prevent longer distance views, with any public views largely restricted to Broad Lane and the public right of way immediately adjacent to the site. No harm to the overall open character and appearance of the countryside is considered to occur as a result of this proposal, given the quality design and layout of the proposed development, the associated landscaping and the context of the site. The proposal from a design and impact perspective should be considered to accord with Policies 21 and 22 of the Core Strategy, Policy DM10 of the SADMP and the NPPF.

AMENITY

- 6.41 There are a number of surrounding residential properties that need to be considered as part of the proposal, along with the school. Nearby houses include Ivy House Farmhouse, the former school caretakers house and Lame Duck Farm and Windy Ridge.
- 6.42 Windy Ridge is located approximately 80m away from the site entrance on the opposite side of Broad Lane. Other than an increase in additional vehicles along the road, no identifiable disturbance will occur to this property, with Ivy House Farmhouse and vegetation located between the application site and this property. This will conceal the car parking and proposed low level lighting, whilst any noise generated by the development would be absorbed by the intervening vegetation. The same relationship

would occur for Lame Duck Farm, which is located 130m to the south-east of the proposed padel courts/café site, with much of the site operations notably further away. The café also faces away from these two properties, removing any potential light spill. The new BNG area with additional planting is also located close to Lame Duck Farm, further reducing any potential amenity impact.

- 6.43 Ivy House Farm is located adjacent to the development, with the associated garden running along the southern edge of the application site. Under the applicant's ownership, the house principally faces towards its own garden, with only a couple of small windows on each floor facing towards the proposed access road. The offset from the driveway provides a relationship no different to that of any estate road, whilst the opening hours will constrain the time of any movements associated with the access. This is in contrast to a typical estate road, where movements can occur at all hours of the day and night. These windows will however provide passive surveillance to aid security of the new facility. The alignment of the access road also ensures no lights face directly towards these windows, whilst a boundary hedge will ensure privacy is maintained.
- 6.44 Outbuildings line the shared boundary with the application site, all facing into the garden. These act as a barrier to screen the rear facing windows and the garden from the application site, removing any overlooking and potential noise disturbance. The integrated flue will have appropriate extraction and odour control integrated to ensure no disturbance due to smells. There will be a minimum distance of 16m between the flue and the closest window, with the apex of the existing barn in between. No material impact is considered to occur, but appropriate conditions can be attached to ensure an acceptable relationship is maintained.
- 6.45 The former school caretakers lodge is located to the north-western corner of the application site. It presents a blank side gable towards the site, with windows on the front and rear elevation. Oblique views will be possible over the parking area from the rear facing windows. The parking is deliberately set away from the shared boundary, with the boundary hedge/vegetation augmented. Coupled with low level bollard lighting with downward facing cowls, no material loss of amenity is considered to occur to this

property. The relationship between the proposed parking at the former lodge is also comparable to that for the school parking area, which is used both for the school staff and for the extra-curricular activities outside school times. The use of the two car parks will therefore be comparable, albeit with additional planting on the new padel court site to better contain any light spill.

- 6.46 The proposed padel courts are located away from both the former school caretakers lodge and Ivy House Farmhouse, ensuring that any noise from the leisure activity is diminished over the 60+ metre separation, which also include new tree planting to physically screen the courts from the lodge.
- 6.47 No loss of amenity is considered to occur to any of the nearby residential properties, enabling compliance with the NPPF and Policy DM10 of the SAMPD.
- 6.48 In respect of the school, all activities at the school are set behind a tree belt, obscuring any visual interrelationship between the sites. The café is set away from the school and thus maximising its physical separation, whilst the parking at the school site offers a further buffer from any potential noise from the padel court use. No harm to the amenity of the school will occur.

ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

- 6.49 An Ecological Appraisal of the site was undertaken by Alca Ecology. This identified the site to consist of modified grassland, bramble scrub, tall forbs, a building and two native hedgerows. This assessment considered that bats, reptiles and badgers do not pose a constraint to development. This includes an assessment of the building for bat roosting potential. It was also considered that there is a low likelihood of great crested newts being impacted, allowing any risk to be adequately mitigated through the use of a Non-Licensed Method Statement. This can be conditioned to any approval.

- 6.50 The use of downward facing lighting which is time controlled will protect any impact upon bats and other nocturnal wildlife, whilst a range of bat and bird boxes can be installed across the site. These matters can be conditioned.
- 6.51 From a biodiversity perspective, all important vegetation on the site is to be retained. This includes the trees and hedgerows, except as necessary to provide an access. As the site forms part of a wider holding, the loss of biodiversity value from the development area is capable of being offset within a new enhancement area in the field to the south-east. This will be protected and appropriately maintained over the next 30 years in accordance with BNG legislation. The provision of a 0.51ha enhancement area enables the provision of a 12.12% gain to habitat units and 10.77% gain to hedgerow units. This level accords with the BNG legislation, as well as the NPPF and Policy DM6 of the SADMP.

PLANNING BENEFITS

- 6.52 It is the applicant's position that the proposal accords with the Development Plan as a whole and as such should be granted planning consent. If it is considered by the Council that the proposal does not comply with the Development Plan when read as a whole, there are a number of benefits that would result from this proposal in order to still allow approval of this planning application, in accordance with the NPPF. These are set out below.

Benefit 1: Delivery of Leisure Facilities

- 6.53 The proposal would deliver a significant new leisure facility comprising four double padel courts. This represents a meaningful expansion of leisure infrastructure within Hinckley and Bosworth Borough, more than doubling existing provision and addressing the current under-provision of dedicated padel facilities both locally and across the wider Leicester and Leicestershire area.

- 6.54 Padel is experiencing substantial growth nationally as an accessible and socially engaging sport suitable for a wide range of ages and abilities. Significant weight should be afforded to this benefit, as it is directly addressing a recognised sporting need.

Benefit 2: Engagement with the Local Community to actively grow the sport amongst Juniors

- 6.55 A central objective of the proposal is to increase participation in physical activity, particularly amongst younger generations and individuals who may not traditionally engage with organised sport or formal exercise environments. The integration of the facility adjacent to a high school, such that the courts can be utilised by the school to further their sporting opportunities, is a key benefit. This strengthens the proposal by encouraging youth participation in sport.
- 6.56 The applicant intends to actively engage with local schools, youth groups and community organisations to explore opportunities for introductory sessions, coaching initiatives, taster events and school partnerships aimed at increasing awareness of and participation in padel. Open-access junior taster sessions and beginner programs will also be used to encourage wider uptake within the local area.
- 6.57 Collectively, the proposed uses create a facility capable of supporting physical health, mental wellbeing, social interaction and community cohesion across a broad range of age groups and user needs. The applicant would also be willing to explore appropriate community engagement commitments or operational measures through planning conditions, where considered necessary by the Local Planning Authority. Significant weight should be afforded to this benefit.

Benefit 3: Health implications

- 6.58 Whilst the direct health outcomes associated with individual lifestyle choices are difficult to quantify at application stage, physical inactivity is widely recognised as a significant contributor to poor long-term physical and mental health outcomes across the UK. As

identified by Nuffield Health, almost 75% (source: www.nuffieldhealth.com) of adults fail to meet recommended NHS activity guidelines. This has substantial implications for public health services and contributes toward increasing rates of musculoskeletal disorders, cardiovascular disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes and wider metabolic health conditions.

- 6.59 Increasing participation in accessible forms of exercise remains an important public health objective, with many adults not achieving recommended activity levels.
- 6.60 The proposal responds positively to this by delivering a diverse and inclusive range of physical activity opportunities capable of attracting a broad user demographic, including individuals who may not typically engage with traditional sports clubs, gym environments or high-impact exercise.
- 6.61 Padel is particularly beneficial in this regard due to its accessible nature, low barrier to entry and inherently social format. Unlike many traditional sports, padel can be enjoyed without requiring advanced technical ability or high levels of fitness, making it particularly attractive to beginners, older adults and individuals returning to exercise following prolonged inactivity. The format also naturally encourages social interaction, repeat participation and regular group activity, supporting both physical activity levels and wider social wellbeing.
- 6.62 The proposed development creates a highly inclusive health, fitness and wellbeing destination capable of supporting healthier lifestyle habits, improved social interaction and increased long-term participation in physical activity across a broad cross-section of the community. This should be afforded significant weight.

Benefit 4: Provision of a Retail/Tourism Facility

- 6.63 It is recognised that there is scope to increase tourism opportunities within the National Forest/Charnwood Forest, with the Development Plan specifically identifying the area around Thornton as an area for such growth. This proposal seeks to provide a café facility

adjacent to a well-used public right of way, that links into the circular routes associated with Thornton Reservoir, as well as the wider routes between the nearby settlements. This seeks to capture and encourage additional walkers and cyclists to this scenic area.

- 6.64 The specific location of this facility also allows it to double its target audience, due to the proximity of the school. It will provide a food and drink outlet for the 114 full time equivalent staff at the school. There is also a number of sports sessions run independently at the school in the afternoon/evenings and at weekends. With direct access proposed from the school car park, which is used for these out of school activities, as well as a direct link from the sports facilities to the application site via the public footpath, there is a significant number of potential customers that will be able to access this new facility as part of existing trips.
- 6.65 Adding to the provision of existing facilities in a known sporting location is logical and augments the ability to dual trips to both facilities. The additional retail/tourism gain generated by the café should be afforded moderate weight.

Benefit 5: Employment Opportunities

- 6.66 Whilst the proposed use does not fall within a traditional employment-generating use class, the development is nevertheless expected to create a meaningful number of direct and indirect employment opportunities associated with the operation of the facility.
- 6.67 The proposed development is anticipated to generate approximately 4 full-time equivalent roles, likely delivered through a combination of both full and part-time positions. These roles are expected to include Padel coaches, Café/Barista staff, cooks, Cleaners and wider Operational Support Personnel.
- 6.68 The diversity of roles created is likely to provide employment opportunities across a broad range of skill levels, including skilled and specialist positions, customer-facing service roles and flexible part-time opportunities suited to students, younger workers, parents returning to work and individuals seeking evening or weekend employment.

6.69 Limited weight should be afforded to the creation of jobs.

Benefit 6: Economic Benefits

6.70 The proposal would generate direct and indirect economic benefits to the area and surrounding area during both the construction and operational phases. The development would involve substantial expenditure associated with construction and fit-out works, including mechanical and electrical work, sporting infrastructure installation, landscaping and ongoing operational expenditure.

6.71 The facility would itself generate revenue as part of the local economy, with business rates contributing to the Council. Most of the products within the café would be sourced from local companies, supporting the wider local economy.

6.72 Limited weight should be afforded to these economic benefits.

Benefit 7: Highway Safety Benefits

6.73 It has been recognised for many years that there is a highway safety issue at school drop-off and pick-up times. The school car park only needs to cater for staff, and thus the parents of the 870 children (maximum in-take level) only have access to the 13 parking spaces off the public highway directly in front of the school. This is recognised even by the school to be a critical issue (see [Appendix 3](#)).

6.74 This proposal offers the opportunity for parents to safely use the proposed car park to drop-off and pick-up in association with the school. The peak school movement events will occur when the use of the padel courts and café will be low, enabling the spaces to be used in association with the school without creating any conflict.

6.75 The potential to remove a significant number of vehicle drop-offs/collections from Broad Lane and dissipate queues to use the existing layby area represents a very significant

benefit of this scheme; this benefit has been very clearly stated as being welcomed by the school.



Photograph showing the 13 off-street parking spaces available for collection of pupils from South Charnwood High School

Benefit 8: Environmental Benefits

- 6.76 The proposal would deliver a high-quality new building, constructed/converted to the highest standards of environmental credentials. This would include the installation of air source heat exchangers and solar panels to generate energy for the site and minimise the daily carbon footprint of the café. Water saving devices will also be installed to all toilets and taps to minimise the impact upon water consumption.
- 6.77 All lighting across the site will be fitted with automatic timers, ensuring that the site is not illuminated when not in use. For the padel courts this will incorporate time-restriction devices that are button operated, so that the lights are only operational when the court is in use.
- 6.78 As part of the development, environmentally sensitive material options will be selected where possible to reduce the carbon footprint of the site's construction.

- 6.79 Additional planting will also be undertaken on site to enhance the site's biodiversity net value. New bird and bat boxes will also be installed to further augment the ecological value of the site.
- 6.80 Moderate weight should be afforded to these environmental benefits.

Planning Benefits Conclusions

- 6.81 There are a wide range of direct and indirect benefits that will result from this proposal. Conversely, the only negative could conceivably be the site's location within the countryside.
- 6.82 When assessed cumulatively, the economic, environmental and social benefits associated with the proposal are considered substantial. This includes the delivery of a much needed leisure facility, additional retail facility to serve the tourism in the area as well as the adjacent school site, highway safety improvements due to the school traffic, enhancement to the public health and indirect benefits to the NHS due to people having the opportunity to be more active, economic benefits through job creation and additional local spend, and environmental benefits including biodiversity net gain and delivery of a modern energy efficient building.
- 6.83 The benefits recognised, due to the direct links with the school and public footpath, are significantly enhanced compared to the scheme at Hoo Hills Farm, the only other padel facility within Hinckley and Bosworth Borough. The benefits there were considered to notably outweigh any harm and consequently the same conclusion has to be reached for this proposal.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 This planning application is seeking the construction of four padel courts, creation of a café through partial conversion and extension of an existing barn, along with associated infrastructure including a new access, parking and soft landscaping/biodiversity gain area. This proposal is located on land at Ivy House Farm, Broad Lane, Markfield.
- 7.2 The proposal is accommodated without the loss of the existing paddock use of the holding for horses. The grazing horses can be displaced to other land on the holding, with the proposal representing diversification.
- 7.3 The scheme is located to provide a unique offer of leisure and retail/tourism facilities to serve the adjacent school, the circular walks associated with Thornton Reservoir and the surrounding population. The physical integration with the school and public footpath ensures safe, direct access away from any vehicles. This underlines the specific need for the facility to be located on the application site. It also allows the known highway safety issues associated with the adjacent school to be improved, with drop-off and pick-up possible from the proposed car park, notably increasing the capacity for vehicles at this time. These requirements dovetail with quiet periods with the padel courts and café ensuring no conflict will occur.
- 7.4 There are specific requirements for the siting and construction of padel courts; this has led to the demand for courts substantially outstripping the supply. Currently only 3 courts in one facility are provided in the Borough; these are on a converted farmyard. Within Leicester and Leicestershire as a whole, there are only 9 courts, with a need from the Lawn Tennis Association recognising a need for 8 additional courts in Hinckley and Bosworth Borough, and 77 across the City and County. This proposal would make a vital contribution towards doubling the number of courts in the Borough. It would also space the facility away from other courts, serving the intervening area/population, as the closest courts are at least 15km away.

- 7.5 The proposed development will be delivered in a sensitive manner, protecting and augmenting the appearance of the site and protecting amenity for all surrounding users. Additional landscaping is proposed, including a biodiversity net gain area, assisting in visually screening the development, which can only be seen from a small number of public viewpoints close to the site on the adjacent footpath and Broad Lane.
- 7.6 The proposal is considered to accord with the Development Plan as a whole. However, if the Council considers that there is some conflict with policy, then the extensive benefits would outweigh any conflict/harm, resulting in a scheme that should still be approved when considered against the tilted balance of the NPPF paragraph 11(d).

APPENDIX 1

**Sport England Response to Application 25/0554/FUL: Padel court at Old
Smithsonians Rugby Football Club, Leicester Forest East**



By email

18 December 2025

**Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England)
Order 2015**

Application Reference: 25/00554/FUL

Site: Old Newtonians Rugby Football Club, Hinckley Road, Leicester Forest East

**Proposal: 4no. proposed padel courts and extended parking area to existing
premises**

Sport England Reference: PA/25/EM/BY/72219

Thank you for consulting Sport England on amended plans and additional information submitted for the above application as published to the Council's website on 12 December 2025. Sport England has previously raised concerns about this proposal in its consultation response dated 25 November 2025.

The Proposed Block Plan (Drw No: 206 Rev 04) has been revised. The development proposed in the red line of the application site (as shown on the Site Location Plan Drw No: 200 Rev 01) remains unaltered in this revision to the Block Plan. The development scheme being applied for is the same proposal as shown in Drw No: 206 Rev 02. The revision to the Proposed Block Plan relates to the pitch layout of land outside of the planning application site boundary. Three pitches are shown laid out on this land. This information is also contained on the amended existing site plan and existing block plan and the amended proposed site plan.

A "Paddle Lighting Design Calculation Dialux Report" has been submitted with the additional information along with a "Synthetic Turf Systems for Padel Courts" document.

**Assessment of the Amended Proposal against Sport England's Playing Fields
Policy and NPPF**

The proposal remains unaltered by the amended plans and would continue to involve the construction of four outdoor partially enclosed padel courts on grass

playing field. Sport England considers proposals for indoor and outdoor sports facilities on playing field against exception 5 of our Playing Fields Policy which states:

The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.

In seeking to balance the potential loss of playing field against the provision of a new outdoor sports facility, Sport England will consider the following factors:

- The need for the facility – Sport England’s consultation response dated 25 November 2025 confirmed that the proposal would meet this criterion.
- Technical suitability – discussed below
- Community availability – Sport England’s consultation response dated 25 November 2025 confirmed that subject to the imposition of a planning condition requiring a Community Use Agreement to be submitted and agreed, then the proposal would meet this criterion.
- Sports development – Sport England’s consultation response dated 25 November 2025 confirmed that the proposal would meet this criterion.
- Local level of pitch provision – discussed below
- The physical location of the new facility – Sport England’s consultation response dated 25 November 2025 confirmed that the proposal would meet this criterion.

Technical suitability

Details were previously not provided of the surface of the courts to be used with a commentary inserted on the drawing which stated “*surface to be confirmed.*” The additional information includes details of the synthetic turf system for padel courts which would be installed along with details of the Lighting Scheme.

The LTA has confirmed that they have no further comments to make on the proposal and that the courts should be designed in accordance with the LTA’s design guidance. Based on the additional information submitted, this bullet point is met.

Local level of pitch provision

The bullet point for Local level of pitch provision considers whether the local area has a shortfall of playing pitches that would be exacerbated by the current proposal.

The Design and Access Statement includes details that the proposed padel courts would be sited on an underutilised area of the rugby club. The additional information provided on the existing and proposed pitch layouts for the land

outside of the red line application site boundary seek to support this view by showing the laying out of three senior rugby pitches with the proposed development in situ.

As raised previously, Blaby District Council has an up-to-date Playing Pitch Strategy (March 2024) (PPS) as required under Paragraph 103 of the NPPF (2024) to inform planning decision making. The PPS indicates a midweek deficit of 2.0 MES at the rugby site despite a surplus across the entire site amounting to 3.5 MES. Text included states that:

“Old Newtonians RFC accesses a dedicated floodlit training area which serves all midweek demand. The Club trains one night per week with both its senior men’s and women’s teams training for 1.5 hours each on a Tuesday night.”

and

“Three standard quality senior rugby union pitches. None are sports lit but there is a dedicated training area on the site which does have sports lighting.”

The provision of football pitches at the site are also included in the PPS. The aim in the PPS is to protect and enhance the site.

The definition of playing field in the NPPF relates to the whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch as defined in the Development Management Procedure Order 2015 and so this protection does not just relate to land marked out as playing pitches but to the whole of the site.

The RFU has provided comments on the amended plans submitted. They confirm that the plans do not appear to address the concerns previously raised with regards to the loss of playing field and the padel courts and car parking would be sited in the same location as shown in previous plans.

With regards to the pitch layout shown, they comment that the plans show a rugby pitch marked out where a football pitch currently exists. Although there are posts in this location, they state that this pitch has not been marked for rugby for some time, and it is uncertain whether this area of land could support additional capacity.

The RFU confirm that there would still be a reduction in midweek provision, and an area suitable for age-grade pitches would be lost. No mitigation measures for this loss have been provided. The RFU previously commented on potential mitigation proposals such as sports lighting around one of the rugby pitches. However, the amended plans and additional information do not include any mitigation proposals to compensate for the loss of this area of playing field. As included in the previous response, this possible resolution would involve land outside of the application site boundary and would require planning permission for such works

The RFU also seek confirmation whether the dual-use pitch (football and rugby) has a PQS of good or better and could carry the additional demand.

The proposed scheme to build four padel courts and extend the car parking to the north and to the east would lead to the loss of playing field and would exacerbate the current shortfall of playing pitches in the area. The RFU continue to object to the proposed development. At present, the proposal does not meet this bullet point.

Summary

The provision of an outdoor Padel court facility in this location could be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh the loss of the area of playing field. However, the Proposed Siting of the Padel Courts would lead to the loss of the dedicated floodlit training area which serves all midweek demand by the Rugby Club and which is used for age-grade rugby pitches. The proposed extensions to the car parking areas would lead to the loss of playing field.

Sport England's Position

Given the above, Sport England continues to **object** to the application as it is currently not considered to accord with any of the exceptions in Sport England's Playing Fields Policy or in paragraph 104 of the NPPF (2024).

Potential to overcome the objection

Sport England would review this position if the following issues were addressed:

- A proposal was designed to address the loss of this dedicated floodlit training area which serves all midweek demand as included in Blaby District Council's PPS and loss of age-grade rugby pitches.
- A pitch layout plan is provided demonstrating how good quality pitches and their required safety run off areas could satisfactorily be marked out on the remaining playing field if the proposed car park extensions and Padel Courts were in place

The submission of additional information to overcome this objection is suggested above. In providing the further information mentioned above, Sport England would ask that the applicant submits this to the Local Planning Authority and not to Sport England directly. That way it forms part of the application submission and its associated audit trail. The Local Planning Authority can then consult Sport England on receipt of this information.

If this application is to be presented to a Planning Committee, we would like to be notified in advance of the publication of any committee agenda(s), report(s) and committee date(s).

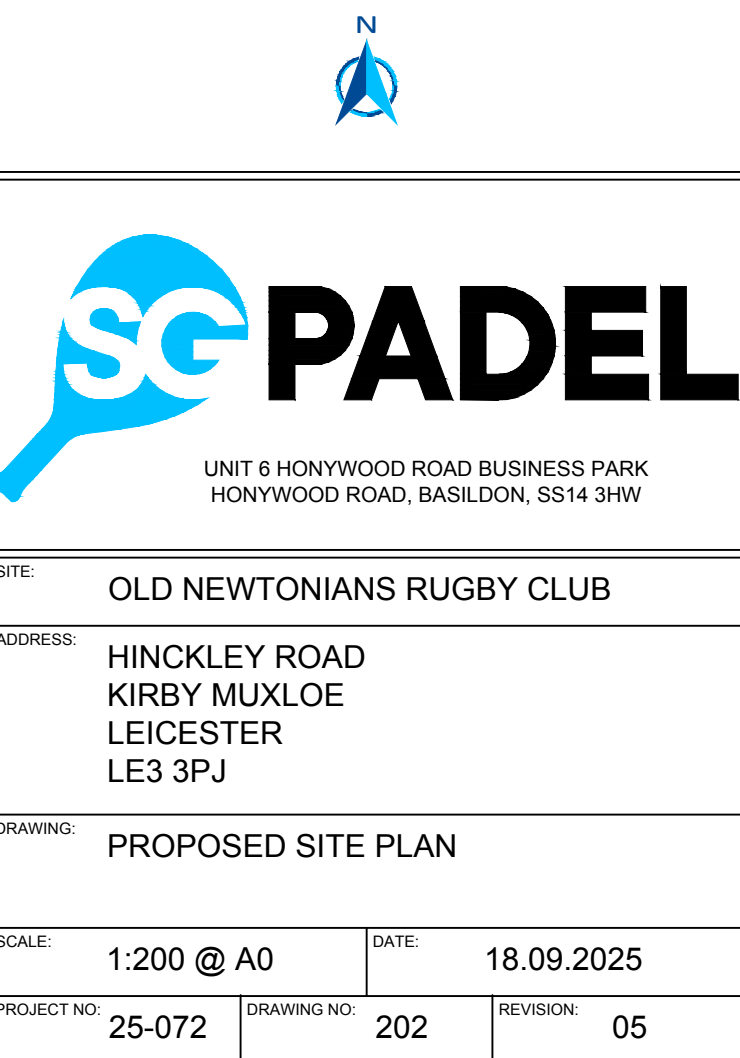
If you would like any further information or advice, please contact the undersigned

Yours sincerely,

Sharron Wilkinson

Planning Manager

Age Group	Number of People
0	100
2	100
4	100
6	100
20	1400
22	1400



APPENDIX 2

Letter of Support from Lawn Tennis Association



LTA

The National Tennis Centre
100 Priory Lane, Roehampton
London SW15 5JQ

T 0208487 7000

www.lta.org.uk
info@lta.org.uk

7th April 2026

REF: Ivy House Café & Padel Limited

To whom it may concern,

The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) is the sport's governing body for Padel. We are working across the country with a wide range of organisations to increase the amount of Padel courts and to meet the large demand from the public.

860,000 adults & juniors played Padel in 2025, an increase of over 50% from the previous year with public awareness of Padel increasing by 38% across the same period.

The LTA has undertaken demand analysis for Padel courts in the Hinckley & Bosworth Borough. This demand data shows that a minimum of 8 courts is required in the borough to meet demand, with only 3 courts currently being provided (in Market Bosworth). To provide a wider Leicester and Leicestershire context, our data shows 77 padel courts can be sustained across the City & County, with the area currently only providing 9 padel courts (so a shortfall of 68 padel courts).

Padel not only increases physical activity levels but creates local community groups, so new Padel facilities can play a vital role by improving residents health and social cohesion. The location of this proposed development has the potential to provide new opportunities for students at a neighbouring secondary school, along with serving various local communities who don't have access to any Padel courts.

We encourage all Padel facilities to register with the LTA, as the sport's governing body, to ensure a joined-up and consistent approach to standards (such as coaching and safeguarding). The LTA also encourages Padel facilities to consider how they will reach a wide range of the community and provide dedicated sessions to 'open up' any facilities to new audiences.

It would be fantastic to see more Padel courts provided in the Hinckley & Bosworth Borough.

Phill Turner

Phill Turner
Delivery Manager

LTA

The National Tennis Centre
100 Priory Lane, Roehampton,
London, SW15 5JQ

www.lta.org.uk



APPENDIX 3

Letter of Support from South Charnwood High School



South Charnwood High School

'encouraging excellence, valuing people'

Headteacher: Simon Andrews

Deputy Headteacher: Abigail Allfree

Assistant Headteachers: Kathryn Juskiewicz, Christopher Peach, Callum Peake

Business Manager: Alistair Keates

17th April 2026

Re: Formal Letter of Support – Planning Application for Ivy House Cafe & Padel.

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of South Charnwood High School, I am writing to offer our strong and unequivocal support for the proposed development of Padel courts, additional car parking, and associated café facilities which is adjacent to our school.

We consider this proposal to represent a highly positive and sustainable addition to local infrastructure, delivering clear educational, health, and community benefits that align with both local planning priorities and national objectives around wellbeing and active lifestyles.

Health, Wellbeing, and Youth Engagement

The proposed Padel courts would significantly enhance access to modern, inclusive sporting provision for young people in the local area. Padel is widely recognised as an accessible and engaging sport, suitable for a broad range of abilities. The availability of such facilities locally would support our school's ongoing commitment to improving physical activity levels, mental wellbeing, and healthy habits among pupils—key priorities reflected in education and public health policy.

Staff, Parents & Community Use

The cafe facility, in particular, would provide a useful facility for staff & parents to use during the day.

Highway Safety and Accessibility

The inclusion of additional car parking is a critical and welcome element of the proposal. Like many schools, we experience pressure at peak drop-off and pick-up times. Improved parking provision would help alleviate congestion, reduce unsafe parking practices, and enhance pedestrian safety for our pupils and families. This represents a tangible safeguarding benefit and a meaningful improvement to the local transport environment.

Wider Planning and Community Benefits

In our view, the proposal makes effective use of space to deliver multi-functional, community-focused infrastructure. It supports key planning principles, including:

- Promoting healthy and active communities
- Enhancing local amenities and social infrastructure
- Improving accessibility and safety

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- Encouraging sustainable, localised leisure opportunities

Importantly, the development would reduce the need for families or our pupils to travel further afield for recreational activities, thereby contributing positively to environmental sustainability.

Conclusion

South Charnwood High School is firmly of the view that this proposal represents a well-considered, community-enhancing development with clear and lasting benefits. We strongly encourage the Local Planning Authority to look favourably upon this application.

Yours faithfully,



Simon Andrews
Headteacher

South Charnwood High School

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