

**Planning Statement**  
**Change of Use of Agricultural Building**  
**Hoo Hills Farm, Bosworth Road, Wellsborough**  
**Proposed Indoor Padel Courts**

**General Description of the Proposed Use**

This Planning Application proposes the change of use of an agricultural building into an indoor sports hall in the E(d) Class of the Use Classes Order which requires full planning permission because the building has been in use for agricultural purposes for less than 10 years.

This statement provides information to demonstrate the acceptability of the change in terms of applicable planning policies and the desirability of permitting this addition to the range of leisure and sporting facilities available in the area for the benefit of its residents.

The proposal is to establish 3 padel courts, being 2 doubles courts and 1 singles court, with minimal ancillary facilities. The nature of the sport is that they are participatory rather than spectator sports so large numbers of people will not be present at any given time. In the case of a club network developing, a minibus parking space is to be provided for visiting teams.

Padel is a rapidly growing racquet sport that combines elements of tennis and squash, played predominantly in doubles on an enclosed court approximately one-third the size of a tennis court. Its distinctive feature is the use of surrounding glass and mesh walls, which allow for dynamic rebounds and strategic shot placement, adding a layer of complexity and excitement to gameplay. The game follows tennis-style scoring and begins with an underhand serve, making it accessible for beginners while remaining tactically rich for experienced players.

The sport is rapidly growing with new facilities opening across the country driven by public interest. Its simplicity and ease of playing at entry level, whilst still providing challenges to those more experienced, is attracting many people and is resulting in much demand for recreational and club-level activity across diverse age groups and abilities.

The management of the use of the courts is conducted via an online booking platform. This means that the courts can be booked for usually one-hour blocks in advance. Allowance is made for ensuring adequate changeover times and staggering of times, to avoid overloading the provision of changing facilities and car parking.

The ancillary facilities will consist of a small reception area, incorporating the ability to sell racquets and balls; male and female changing facilities and toilets; a small seating area for resting, with vending machines for drinks. The facility has minimal staffing requirements, but because of its long hours of opening will need two full time equivalent employees.

Due to the limited capacity of the courts, the car parking requirements and traffic generation are considerably lower than sports halls which provide for team sports. The implications for this are dealt with in full in the report of Edwards and Edwards on the highway and transportation issues accompanying the application. In terms of sustainability, the proposal will serve a wide area of urban and rural population, therefore its location in a rural area is appropriate.

The activity of the proposed recreational use would occur indoors and will not create a noise condition other than the normal operation of the car park.

### Planning Policy Considerations

There are three levels of adopted policy which are applicable to the application - The National Planning Policy Framework, the adopted Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan and the emerging review of the Local Plan which aims to update the relevance of local policy to reflect changes since the adoption of the existing plan. New policies are emerging on the issue of sports and recreation provision but the timetable for moving these forwards is subject to doubt because the government has yet to publish the regulatory framework for the ongoing review of Local Plans. The local documents are supplemented by the Government's Planning Practice Guidance and the Supplementary Planning Documents adopted by Hinckley and Bosworth Council as formal guidance for the carrying out of their Development Management function. In the decision-making process, where policies have differing objectives, the Local planning Authority must decide the weight to apply to all considerations of benefits and harm and exercise a planning balance to reach a sound conclusion.

The relevant policies in this instance are:

Those relating to the need to grant planning permission for recreational facilities to encourage health and wellbeing in the community.

Those relating to the protection of amenity, transport sustainability and safety, the natural and historic environments and avoiding adverse impacts upon each of them.

Whether there is an adverse impact from the loss of the use which might have resulted from the currently permitted agricultural use of this building.

Paragraph 103 of the NPPF demands that Local Planning Authorities should take account of the following in order to promote healthy and well communities:

*103. 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, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. 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.*

The adopted Local Plan has policies designed to protect the loss of existing facilities and acknowledges the need for additional facilities but does not essentially address the private provision of the nature of facilities being proposed here and provides no specific guidance for the development management process.

In the emerging review of the Local Plan, policies NEW 05 and NEW 06 cover the demands for the additional provision of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, mainly from the prospect of new

residential development funding provision. They are therefore not particularly relevant to the current proposal, other than providing recognition that there is an ongoing deficiency in provision which should be addressed.

### Relevance of the Loss of the Agricultural Building and the Need for Diversification in the Agricultural Economy

In the changing circumstances of the move from guaranteed agricultural subsidies to more environmentally based schemes which have significantly less central funding from DEFRA, the government is placing greater weight on the need for agricultural diversification. Three years of difficult climatic conditions and poor global prices for grain have turned the economics of the farming of this unit from being productive towards facing a very uncertain future. The building was constructed in the expectation that grain prices would continue to be at a level which would support the considerable investment which was made in it. That is no longer the case, therefore in effect it is a redundant building and the alternatives for its future all involve the introduction of new employment uses. The current proposal is considered to be the most beneficial for the local community.

### Assessment of Planning Balance

National policy supports the provision of facilities to improve the health and wellbeing of the population

By utilising an existing building with ideal ceiling height for use for indoor sports this proposal can be implemented as soon as internal fitting out occurs, without the need for drawing down on the community funds which will remain available to the community bodies for the enhancement of current facilities elsewhere.

Accordingly, the proposed facility will offer a rapid contribution to the acknowledged under-provision of facilities in the district for healthy indoor recreation, without a significant loss of employment generating opportunities. Given that, there are no matters which would result in the development being unacceptable, with no adverse impact upon the natural or historic environment, or wider transport network.