

Making a racket for new padel centre

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Leatherhead could soon host international competition after Surrey’s first indoor padel centre was approved. Padel is a racket sport of Mexican origin, typically played in doubles, and is like a mix between Tennis and Squash.

The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) has said it is committed to investing in the growth of padel and wants to build more courts that can be used throughout the year.

The new facilities, granted planning permission next to Leatherhead Leisure Centre by Mole Valley District Council, are considered critical to sustaining this growth, the LTA said, and would enable more adults and juniors to enjoy, compete and experience the game.

Six new courts will be split by cafe area and viewing platform under a large dome next to Leatherhead Leisure Centre. Councillors agreed the benefits sports and recreation would bring to the borough outweighed the harm the 11 metres-tall dome would have on the green belt.

The LTA has also said the courts would be used at both national and international levels. The dome would be shielded to help it blend in to the surrounding area.

Councillor Roger Adams (Liberal Democrat, Bookham West) said: “I’m all for trees being used as screens and the more we can screen buildings the better and certainly this is a very large building, although it is green, it will be nice just to take the solid lines away by more planting.”

Cllr Raj Haque (Liberal Democrat, Fetcham) said: “This proposal is one of the best ones in terms of sporting facilities that will be provided.”

Cllr Simon Budd added that he was pleased the dome was going to be green as the white one in Dorking was now discoloured by mould.

The courts include parking for 24 cars and will occupy land used as a boating lake as well as storage for waste containers.

To help spread the game, developers said they would run outreach programs with nearby schools “encourage involvement with the facility” as well as set up a club and hold regular padel lessons.

The land council owned and will be leased for use as a padel facility and the dome structure will be fully enclosed to prevent significant light spillage.

Image - example of indoor padel centre