

Appendix 2 - Analysis of Fordbridge Park Consultation

The consultation on the proposal for Fordbridge Park was open from Friday 17 July – Sunday 16 August. 239 responses were received. The consultation was advertised in the borough bulletin, on the council website, at Fordbridge Park tennis courts, at local libraries and health centres.

Respondents were asked to provide their address details. Of the 239 respondents 229 live in Spelthorne, 8 live outside the borough and 2 didn't provide details. The following table shows the postcode areas of the respondents where this information was given.

Postcode area	Number of responses
TW13	3
TW14	1
TW15	91
TW16	15
TW17	13
TW18	73
TW19	10
TW20	1
TW7	1
KT13	1
KT15	1
KT16	1
GU20	1
No postcode provided	27

Q. Are you in favour of the proposed development for the facilities at Fordbridge Park?

175 (73%) were in favour, 59 (25%) were against and 25 (2%) were neither for nor against the proposal.

Q. Do you think the proposed charging for the facility is reasonable?

Residents were unclear if price was per court or per person. The price is per court not per person. This makes the proposed cost per head smaller.

People who objected to the proposal, requested that the facility should remain free of charge.

Those in favour were happy with the proposed charges.

Q. Do you think the proposed number of hours for free community access is reasonable?

The majority of residents voting against the proposals suggested that the courts should be able to be accessed at all times free of charge.

Other suggestions included:

2 hours per day during the week and 4 hours at the weekend

50% daylight hours

14 hours per week

4 hours per day.

It is recommended to trial the 10 hours of free access and then assess whether this is a suitable number of hours.

Q. Do you have a preference for the times of access for free community use?

The majority of residents would like the hours of access to be outside of school hours, during week day evenings and weekends. There were some requests for during the day between 9am-5pm. One suggestion was to consult with young people to find out what times they would be keen to access the courts and another expressed that the free access should be outside of organised sessions by Tennis Focus Academy. Some expressed that the current arrangement of one court always available for free public access should continue.

The frequent reasons for objections are listed below along with the counterbalance arguments to the points:

The residents are already paying for the facility in their council tax

All the public tennis courts in Spelthorne were chargeable until 2004. The courts became free to access after this time. Maintenance costs are increasing and if the council are to retain all their facilities in the long term, this type of project will assist us to do this. This project offers an opportunity for the courts to be managed externally, ensuring that they will be maintained to a high standard. The facility will be leased so the provider must be able ensure that they can pay the rent by generating income by charging to play on the courts.

The courts are free in other areas of Spelthorne so why should we pay in Ashford? Other areas of Spelthorne could be more suitable.

In comparison to neighbouring boroughs, Spelthorne is very well served with tennis courts. Ashford in particular, is fortunate to have 2 public parks with tennis courts as there are 6 adult courts and 2 mini courts at Clockhouse Lane (Ashford Recreation Ground). Other areas of the borough e.g. Shepperton and Sunbury only have one park, each with 3 courts. Fordbridge Park was the preferred location requested by the tennis provider. Lammas Recreation Ground has previously been considered for the project but was unsuitable due to the covenant on the park and also liability to flooding. The table below shows the comparison between Spelthorne and other local boroughs for free tennis courts.

Borough	Number of Free courts*	Population**	Residents Per Court
Spelthorne	24	90,390	3767
Hounslow	30	254,000	8467
Elmbridge	20	130,875	6544
Hillingdon	12	275,500	22959
Ealing	8	339,300	42412
Runnymede	3	80,510	26837
Woking	1	99,198	99198
Slough	10	141,838***	14184
Windsor & Maidenhead	5	144,560	28912
Surrey Heath	3	84,000	28000

*Based on figures from Sport England's Active Places Database

**Based on figures from 2011 Census

***Based on figures from 2012

Close proximity to Ashford Tennis Club and Elmsway Tennis Club

Again, Fordbridge Park was the preferred location for the project as requested by the tennis provider. Ashford is in the middle of Spelthorne so naturally draws participants from across the

borough. The project will offer a community tennis centre as opposed to a tennis club and therefore, will attract a different target audience to the neighbouring clubs. The prices for the community tennis centre are around 10% of club membership. The focus of the project is to attract new players to the sport and there will be the opportunity for people to progress on to a club environment if desired. There are regular sessions already taking place at Fordbridge Park, so the project is already currently operating.

Parking will be a problem

Fordbridge Park has an adequate car park for approximately 40-50 cars.

It will lead to additional traffic

The park is already well used and generates a reasonable traffic flow. We do not anticipate a substantial increase in traffic flow.

It will lead to additional litter

The park has numerous bins which are well used at the park. The pavilion will also provide both rubbish and recycling bins. Tennis Focus Academy staff often litter pick if necessary and will continue to do so.

The floodlights will be imposing on residents

When planning permission was submitted, neighbouring properties all received a letter informing them of the proposal. No letters of objections were received. Initially it was requested that floodlights could be available until 10pm but planning permission was granted until 9.30pm to be considerate to the neighbours.

Financial security of project

Spelthorne Borough Council's finance team have been involved with the project and have checked the business plan.

The company are about profit

Community Tennis Ltd are a not-for-profit company who will be responsible for the maintenance of the courts. Tennis Focus Academy will deliver the tennis coaching and the income received will cover the coaches' wages.

Loss of Public space/amenity

The park will remain open to the public and there will be some free access to the tennis courts. The addition of a pavilion will provide an additional public facility.

Residents cannot afford to pay

The prices have been considered carefully to be as inclusive as possible. There will an average of 10 hours per week free access with free loaning of rackets. Also, there will be free holiday camps run during February and October half terms. Families on low income will be entitled to discounted rates on the discount card.

Risk of noise/disturbance

The increased presence in the park is not anticipated to raise the noise level considerably. Some neighbouring residents have commented that they like the sound of a tennis ball being hit.

The council should be promoting well-being and activities for young people

The project is encouraging physical activity by offering an improved tennis facility which will benefit people of all ages. Tennis Focus Academy will also work with local school, youth groups and

charities to encourage participation and will also be offering some free tennis sessions. The floodlights will facilitate the opportunity for tennis to be played all year round. Therefore, the project will enhance the hours available, providing additional physical and social benefits.

There have been previous disagreements between Ashford Tennis Club and Tennis Focus Academy

Spelthorne Borough Council are aware that there was a personal 'disagreement' between parties, which is not a matter of public concern. Spelthorne Borough Council have worked with both the director of Tennis Focus Academy and Ashford Tennis Club for a number of years. We will continue to work in partnership with both organisations.

This is purely a cost saving initiative

The project will save the council money and this is an important consideration when public money is scarce. An important driver behind the project is the improvement in the tennis provision. The facility will be maintained to a higher standard.

There is no charge for other facilities e.g. play grounds, skate parks etc.

Local community clubs and organisations pay to hire the council's football pitches and tennis courts. As previously mentioned, all the tennis courts in the borough used to be chargeable. People expect to pay to participate in all other sports such as golf, swimming, table tennis etc.

There are other disused buildings in the park – why build another building?

All the buildings in Fordbridge Park are currently in use or there are plans for them to be occupied.

Longer opening times may introduce unsavoury behaviour

Over the summer period of 2014, whilst Tennis Focus Academy were coaching in the park, there were no crimes reported. The increased presence in the park will improve the park security.

Those in favour of the project commented on numerous advantages including:

The project will enable play all year round and improve the overall tennis experience.

In reference to the coaching that Tennis Focus Academy have recently been providing in the park the following comments are:

The set-up is a 'credit to the borough' and an enjoyable experience for the whole family.

People have commented that Fordbridge Park has a real buzz and the project can happily function alongside Ashford Lawn Tennis Club.

People have commented that there has been a reduction in anti-social behaviour.

Some residents feel it is affordable to all the public with a professional structure and provides the opportunity to nurture talent. By providing free tennis during school holidays will not only help families with childcare costs, but will keep children healthy and safe. Some residents feel reassured that they will not lose the courts in the future and that they will be looked after. Also, tennis participants, spectators and dog walkers welcome the idea of being able to buy a coffee.

Q. Do you have any other comments on the proposal including any ideas or suggestions on the facilities provided?

Residents have requested seated areas courtside, potentially offering benches. New fencing and gating needs to be considered. Additionally, the provision of centre bands on the nets and winders for the nets could be beneficial. Some residents have suggested considering alternatives such as speaking to Ashford Tennis Club regarding offering a 'pay and play' option.

The consultation has highlighted some issues to be considered which include:

The payment methods for courts as the facility of online booking suggests only card payments can be accepted. The floodlights will require the park to remain open later so we need to consider how the park will be closed. The usage of other local tennis courts may be increased so the council need to investigate the resurfacing of courts in Knowle Green.

In conclusion, as the consultation has shown that 73% are in favour of the proposal, we are keen to proceed with the project. There are some important issues to consider when proceeding which are all listed above.