

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Proposed Development

Outline Planning Application for the Construction of Two Covered Padel Courts and Play Park within Trowbridge Town Park

1. Introduction

Purpose of this Assessment

This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared in support of the Outline Planning Application for the redevelopment of part of Trowbridge Town Park to provide two covered padel courts, a revised nine-hole adventure golf course and associated improvements to the park's recreational facilities.

The application site lies within the Trowbridge Conservation Area and therefore consideration has been given to the potential impact of the proposals upon the significance, character and appearance of this designated heritage asset.

This assessment has been prepared in accordance with:

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- National Planning Practice Guidance
- Wiltshire Core Strategy
- Trowbridge Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (where relevant)

The purpose of this document is to demonstrate that heritage considerations have been integral to the development of the scheme and that the proposal has evolved through design review, public consultation and environmental assessment to minimise any impact upon the Conservation Area whilst delivering substantial public benefits.

2. Site Description

Trowbridge Town Park is the principal public park serving the town and has fulfilled this recreational role for many decades. The park forms an important element of the Trowbridge Conservation Area, providing an attractive landscaped setting between the historic town centre, The Civic Centre and surrounding residential areas.

The application site is located within the existing leisure area of the park and currently accommodates the eighteen-hole adventure golf course together with adjacent recreational facilities including tennis courts, children's play equipment, kiosk buildings and bowls green.

The site is therefore already characterised by modern recreational infrastructure and is not an undeveloped or historically untouched part of the park.

Importantly, the proposals do not extend development into previously undeveloped parkland and no changes are proposed to the overall park boundaries.

3. Significance of the Heritage Asset

The Trowbridge Conservation Area

The significance of the Conservation Area derives from a combination of historic, architectural and landscape qualities.

These include:

- The historic relationship between the town centre and its principal public open space.
- Mature tree avenues and established landscaping.
- Important public views across the park.
- The civic relationship with The Civic Centre and neighbouring historic buildings including the bandstand.
- The continued use of the park as an important public recreational facility.

Unlike many historic parks where significance derives from formal Victorian layouts or surviving historic gardens, this part of the Town Park has continued to evolve over many decades to accommodate changing recreational needs.

The adventure golf itself is a modern addition to the park and demonstrates that this area has already adapted over time to provide contemporary leisure facilities. Recent work also includes the adjacent Multi Use Games Area which was upgraded to a 3g football pitch in May 2026.

The significance of this part of the Conservation Area therefore lies less in its historic fabric and more in its continued role as an accessible public recreation space within a mature landscaped setting.

4. Description of the Proposed Development

The application seeks outline planning permission for:

- Two covered padel courts.
- Redevelopment of the existing play area.

Additional work within the project will also include:

- Reconfiguration and upgrade of the existing adventure golf from eighteen holes to nine holes.
- Improvements to the park kiosk and associated visitor facilities.

The canopy covering the padel courts would have a maximum height of approximately 10 metres.

Detailed design, external materials, landscaping and appearance will be determined at full application stage.

The proposal has been deliberately designed to retain the existing recreational character of the site whilst providing modern facilities capable of serving future generations.

5. Design Evolution

A significant amount of work has been undertaken throughout the design process to ensure the development responds positively to the historic character of the Conservation Area.

Following an extensive public consultation, during which 631 responses were received, a number of amendments were made to the proposals specifically to reduce their visual impact. The location of the padel courts was revised so that they sit further within the existing tree framework rather than occupying a more visually prominent position adjacent to the bowls club. This relocation allows the existing mature trees to provide greater natural screening from key viewpoints both within and outside the park. The revised position also ensures that the structures are viewed primarily alongside existing leisure facilities including the tennis courts and adventure golf rather than appearing as isolated new development within the wider park landscape.

The design team has also carefully considered the overall height of the canopy in relation to the surrounding landscape. Although the canopy reaches a maximum height of approximately 10 metres, it has been positioned so that it does not project above the established tree line when viewed from the principal public viewpoints. This substantially reduces the perceived scale of the development within the wider Conservation Area.

The Council is also actively considering the use of muted colours and finishes for the canopy, including a potential green-coloured roof covering, in order that the structure blends with the surrounding mature tree canopy and becomes a recessive feature within the landscape.

These amendments demonstrate the Council's commitment to responding positively to public feedback and to reducing the visual impact of the proposal wherever reasonably possible.

6. Assessment of Heritage Impact

Historic Character

The proposal would not alter the historic function of this part of the Town Park. The site would continue to operate as an area dedicated to recreation, leisure and community activity, consistent with its long-established use.

Rather than introducing an entirely new land use, the proposal represents the modernisation and replacement of ageing recreational infrastructure. The historic evolution of public parks demonstrates that recreational facilities naturally change over time in response to community needs.

The proposal therefore respects the ongoing evolution of the Town Park whilst retaining its principal historic purpose.

Character and Appearance

The proposal has been designed to sit within an existing cluster of recreational facilities rather than extending built development into open parkland. The padel courts are adjacent to existing tennis courts and 3G pitch, adventure golf and visitor facilities, ensuring the character of this leisure zone remains coherent.

The overall openness of the wider park is retained.

Landscape Setting

The mature trees surrounding the site make an important contribution to the Conservation Area.

The revised location of the courts takes advantage of this existing landscape framework. Existing trees will continue to soften views of the development and maintain the predominantly green character of this part of the park. The proposal does not require the removal of significant landscape features that contribute positively to the Conservation Area.

Additional planting opportunities will be explored during the full planning stage to further integrate the development into its surroundings.

Views

Views of the development are generally experienced within an established recreational setting.

From many viewpoints the proposed canopy will be seen alongside existing leisure facilities. The revised siting significantly reduces longer-distance views across the park, particularly in relation to the skyline of the park.

Where the canopy is visible, the surrounding mature vegetation will soften its appearance.

Scale and Massing

Whilst the canopy reaches approximately 10 metres in height, careful consideration has been given to its relationship with the surrounding mature trees.

The revised design ensures that the structure generally sits below, or is visually absorbed within, the established tree canopy when viewed from the principal public locations. The canopy itself will comprise an open-sided lightweight structure, avoiding the appearance of a solid enclosed building.

This considerably reduces its visual mass.

Materials

Detailed materials will be agreed through the procurement process and then detailed at full planning, this will be in line with the mitigation advised in the Noise Impact Assessment.

The Council is committed to selecting finishes that minimise visual prominence. Current design discussions include the use of green-coloured canopy materials to better integrate with the surrounding tree canopy and reduce visual contrast.

The use of subdued colours and lightweight structural elements will further reduce the overall visual impact.

Lighting

Lighting will be carefully designed to minimise light spill beyond the immediate playing area. Modern directional LED lighting will be specified to ensure illumination is focused on the courts while protecting neighbouring residential amenity, wildlife and the wider character of the Conservation Area.

Noise

An independent Noise Impact Assessment has informed the development of the proposals. Two further acoustics companies were also approached and provided reports ratifying the approach taken in the initial NIA.

Mitigation measures identified within those assessments will be incorporated into the detailed design where appropriate.

7. Public Benefits

Paragraphs 208 to 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework require any less than substantial harm to be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal.

The public benefits arising from this scheme are considerable.

These include:

Investment in the Town Park

The proposals form part of a wider programme of investment to modernise facilities that are reaching the end of their operational life.

This will secure the long-term future of the Town Park as the principal public recreation destination within Trowbridge.

Improved Health and Wellbeing

Padel is one of the fastest-growing sports in the UK and provides opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to participate in physical activity throughout the year.

The proposal supports healthier lifestyles and increased community participation in sport.

Improved Accessibility

The redevelopment provides modern recreational facilities that are more inclusive and accessible than many of the existing facilities they replace.

Economic Benefits

Improved visitor facilities are expected to increase footfall within the Town Park, encourage longer visitor stays and provide wider economic benefits to the town centre.

Social Benefits

The proposals provide opportunities for schools, sports clubs, community organisations and families to benefit from enhanced recreational facilities.

Environmental Benefits

The development makes efficient use of an existing leisure site rather than requiring development on undeveloped land elsewhere.

Existing mature landscaping will continue to define the character of the site, with opportunities for additional planting to further enhance biodiversity and visual integration.

8. Conclusion

The proposed development has been carefully designed to preserve the character and appearance of the Trowbridge Conservation Area while delivering substantial long-term public benefits.

The proposals occupy an existing recreational area that has evolved over time to accommodate changing leisure needs and do not introduce development into previously undeveloped parkland.

Throughout the design process, heritage considerations have been central to the evolution of the scheme. Following extensive public consultation, the position of the padel courts was amended to take advantage of existing mature tree screening, reduce visibility from key viewpoints and ensure the structures are read as part of the existing cluster of leisure facilities. The Council is also considering the use of a green canopy and other recessive materials to further minimise visual impact.

Any impact on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area is considered to amount to less than substantial harm. That limited harm is clearly outweighed by the substantial public benefits arising from the regeneration of ageing recreational facilities, improved health and wellbeing, increased accessibility, enhanced community provision and long-term investment in one of Trowbridge's most valued public spaces.