

**Craftivism & Chat – July 2020**

**#makemertonaccessible**

**The All England Lawn and Tennis Club**

Our access champions met with The All England Lawn and Tennis Club (AELTC) to discuss the accessibility of their new grounds on Grand Drive in Raynes Park that will be used for Disabled championship training and more.

The grounds consist of several grass and acrylic tennis courts, dome courts, spaces for activities such as Tai Chi and yoga and a clubhouse. The grounds will provide practice, training, and physio facilities for Disabled tennis players. AELTC are keen for this facility to have an off-court footprint. The want the community to enjoy the space too. The clubhouse will be open to the public and they will offer a pay and play option. Therefore, as it will be a public space AELTC and Merton CIL felt it was useful for Disabled voices to be heard and ensure that the space is fully accessible and inclusive.

AELTC met with Merton CIL and presented their plans for development to our access champions. They highlighted the work that they had already done to consider accessibility and inclusiveness for Deaf and Disabled people. This included consulting with Disabled tennis players and ensuring their plans met access guidelines. The club house to tennis courts is step free and easy tread materials have been used.

The plans include a number of accessible features including 8 accessible parking spaces, accessible changing rooms and showers, wheelchair storage, changing places toilet, 5 accessible toilets, training room for flexible use, a lift and more.

Although we were excited to see that accessibility has been largely considered we had a few extra useful suggestions that we wished to share. Please see comments our access champions shared with AELTC below:

* As well as wheelchairs, mobility scooters should be considered. Sometimes they are larger in size than a wheelchair.
* It would be good for charging points for scooters to be installed and storage to be considered.
* There is only one lift in the premises. If the lift breaks down and Disabled people are on the terrace they will be trapped. Another lift or procedures need to be considered. A ramp was discussed but the height of the terrace is too high, and the ramp would be too long. AELTC confirmed they have refuge points, equipment and procedures in place.
* In the changing rooms and toilets there needs to be somewhere to rest crutches. It can cause great difficulty and cause issues manoeuvring when there is no where for them to rest. This could be a magnetic pad, a grab feature or something like a small umbrella stand.
* It would be great to consider movable metal frames to help people in changing rooms and showers.
* There are 8 Disabled bays and around 100 spaces. We asked if more than 8 bays could be offered. AELTC mentioned there was a procedure in place for Disabled players in training or competing to be dropped off so that the bays remain vacant for visitors.
* The space for bicycle bays needs to consider that adapted bikes may take up more room. Can adapted bicycle spaces be reserved?
* The grounds are accessible by bus and it should be ensured that the walkway into the venue is fully accessible. AELTC confirmed that it is tarmacked and accessible. They also have two entrances and the bus stop is close to the pedestrian entrance.
* All doors are power operated which we thought was great.
* We were keen to suggest a changing places toilet and were delighted to see that it was included in their plans. It has an inbuilt hoist.
* The only hoist is in the changing places space. We suggested a mobile hoist in case one is needed elsewhere.
* Consider a hoist in therapy rooms for Disabled players
* There are lockers in the changing rooms, and we thought that lower lockers should be marked for Disabled people who may have trouble reaching up or be in wheelchairs.
* Review the spacing in the café as table may be close and Disabled people may have to ask to get by which will limit their independence.
* Seating is needed for Disabled people on crutches to rest around the grounds. AELTC confirmed that there are benches and spaces for wheelchair users to rest around the venue.
* Clear signs to help you see where you are going and staff and security guards that are welcoming.
* Disability Awareness training for staff.
* Some toilets had left hand seats – there needs to be clear signage which accessible toilets are which.
* Ensure that flush handle is on the right side in accessible toilets. It can be very difficult for Disabled people when the flush is on the wrong side.
* Changing places toilet does not need to look clinical.
* Important to register with changing places website as Disabled people in Merton will use this to find out what venues are accessible to them.
* Ensure that the colour paint used in accessible toilets is accessible to people with visual impairments. Do not paint doors similar colour to walls, do not paint walls same colour as grab rails etc.
* Make it clear that vacant spaces can be used as quiet spaces for those with conditions such as autism.
* Hearing loops installed in clubhouse.
* Two-way communications systems could be useful.
* Acoustics on reception area. AELTC confirmed that this has been considered
* Accessible space (lower desk) at reception but not at the cafe. This should be considered.
* Consider glass used and reflections that are created.
* It would be nice for Disabled spaces to watch the tennis to be varied. AELTC confirmed that all courts are flat and there are a variety of spaces that can be used to watch.
* Induction loops should be installed at reception and café. Flexible induction loops should be considered but they are not of high quality.

We were delighted to share our views with AELTC and we will be following up with them in a few months to find out if our recommendations have been implemented in their plans or informed any changes that they made.