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Haringey Council London Borough
Planning, Regeneration & Economy,
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Dear Nathan Keyte,

**Consultation response for proposed development at Georgians Tennis Club, Crouch End
Playing Fields, Haringey, London, N8 8JJ (Planning application reference HGY/2026/0579)**

1. Introduction and Engagement Overview

This letter has been prepared by WEA Planning as the agent on behalf of the applicant to respond to the comments received through the consultation period for the proposed development 'Erection of all-weather canopies over 3 no. padel courts (proposed) and installation of 2no. pickleball courts (retrospective)' at the Georgians Tennis Club. This letter will summarise the engagement process and respond to the themes raised which concern material considerations.

In addition to the process detailed in the 'Engagement Report' (Kanda Consulting), the applicant requested an extension to the application in order to present the proposal to local residents as the development generated significant local interest and the applicant wanted to engage proactively with the community, present the plans and facilitate a forum to answer questions. The in-person event was held at the Georgians Tennis Club at 4-7pm 10th April with attendees from the applicant, agent and Kanda Consulting. Attendees to the event asked questions relating to openness; the colour, height and design of the coverings; technical questions about the VIA methodology and images; concerns for ecology and drainage; and impacts to local neighbours such as noise and increased parking. Several attendees also raised support for covered padel courts in the area and some residents believed the covers would be lightweight and benefit from visual screening.

The online application portal was readily available for residents and stakeholders to respond to the proposal ahead of the event. The consultation deadline was extended to 25th April, with a

number of responses registered online after this date. Three responses have been uploaded to the application as individual files.

As of 1st May, there have been more comments in support of the application than objections. Numbers are not precise as some residents have commented multiple times, but the portal gives a figure of 214 comments in support of the development and 206 comments objecting to the proposal. The comments cover similar themes. This letter will respond to the matters thematically to address the material considerations raised by the local community.

2. Themes and responses

Openness and MOL

Concerns were raised regarding the impact on openness and development within the MOL. London Plan (2021) Policy G4 recognises that MOL has the same status as Green Belt. The NPPF (2024) outlines key parameters for inappropriate development in Green Belt land, and the exceptions to this. Paragraph 154b states that:

*Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:
b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*

A Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) was produced to support the application and respond to the council's concerns as raised during the pre-application advice. The methodology, study area and verified views were chosen and confirmed with the council ahead of the VIA being produced and the application submitted. The VIA followed best practice as established by the Landscape Institute, and in accordance with local and national policy.

The photography and imagery align with the best practice advice given by the Landscape Institute. One CGI mock-up was provided as this would be the most sensitive viewpoint for change. Other images featured a green outline of the proposed coverings, with a dashed line to denote where the coverings would not be visible and would be screened, and a solid line where the coverings would be visible from the receptor.

The proposal is for facilities in connection with the existing outdoor sport and recreation use and the VIA confirms that the proposal would not impact the openness of the site. The application should therefore be considered as appropriate development within the MOL.

The VIA confirms that the site is visually contained within mature tree boundaries, *“The Site is visually contained within the summer months, when the trees that fall on its northern boundary and along the southern access track are in leaf. It is considered that views are also relatively contained in the winter too, due to the density of this vegetation.”* Mitigating any existing or proposed effects for visual and spatial openness.

The VIA found that the proposed development *“would not affect the visibility through the Site. It would also not affect the existing pockets of visual openness experienced within Crouch End Playing Fields.”* The VIA concluded that the proposed development would retain openness across the wider MOL designation.

Several comments have referred to the beauty of the site. The VIA confirms that *“MOL is a planning designation intended to preserve the ‘openness’ of the land and prevent urban sprawl and does not relate to landscape value or sensitivity” ... “No landscape designations apply to the Site that would denote landscape value.”* For these reasons, a VIA was undertaken, rather than a LVIA. Beauty would not be a consideration in whether a development was appropriate in MOL, but design and character effects from the proposal are material to the determination of an application.

Accordingly, the development would accord with the NPPF definition of appropriate development.

VSCs

The proposed development would bring significant benefits to the local community if approved. Should the decision maker disagree that the proposed development would be appropriate development in the MOL, then they should give significant weight to the VSCs.

The applicant is committed to providing up to 20 hours of free court usage each week to local community groups, including Highgate Wood School, North London NHS Trust, Mind Haringey. The offer is only possible if the courts have optimal use, provided by the proposed coverings.

Covering the existing courts would seek to improve the existing use of the padel facilities. Currently the courts are used 40% less in wetter colder months than in the summer. The revenue from the additional hours of use would fund the free community access programme, directly putting financial resources into the local community.

Amenity impacts

Comments and discussions raised concerns for overheating within the courts and lack of light under the canopies. The canopies would be 60% translucent, allowing for a good level of daylight intrusion to reduce the need for floodlighting during daylight hours. The courts would remain open at the sides, above the existing screening but below the canopies, to mitigate the potential for overheating.

The Light Impact Assessment prepared to accompany this application confirmed that the canopy has reduced the impact for sky glow, reducing the sky glow from 0.4% in the existing scheme, to 0% with the proposed canopy. The Assessment confirmed that the coverings would not add any new impacts, *“The addition of canopies does not introduce any new upward light, glare or additional spill beyond that which is already assessed and approved”*. The proposal would remain acceptable regarding lighting impacts, with some improvement for sky glow from the coverings.

Neighbours raised concerns for noise impacts from covering the padel courts. An external study on noise impacts in padel demonstrates negligible impact from covered courts compared to uncovered padel. The study found that coverings are likely to slightly impact players on the courts, as covering would prevent noise leaving upwards, noise would continue to leave the courts through the mesh panels sideways, which are currently open to elements above the existing glazed screen. It is anticipated that any impact would be negligible from the existing noise impact of the uncovered courts.

A small number of comments raised concerns for security and surveillance of the paths. The courts would remain visually open at eye-level. The existing screening is transparent up to 3m and would preserve existing sightlines through the site.

Intensification and operation

Several comments have been received referring to impacts from “extended hours” of use and the addition of “night time” facilities. The proposed development does not increase the operations of the padel courts beyond the current use. The existing, allowed operating hours will benefit from improved use in line with the court capacity, during periods of inclement weather. The courts will continue to cease use at 10pm along with the flood lighting, as is conditioned under the approved use of the courts.

Residents expressed concern over increased traffic and parking. The proposed development brings no changes to parking arrangements from the existing, the maximum capacity of the

padel courts would remain unchanged from the allowed situation, and the proposal should not bring more traffic than times when the courts are already at capacity.

Finance and ownership details are not material planning considerations. The proposed development would improve the sustainability of the club and maintain the courts and programming, as well as fund the free hours of community engagement. The club fund community programmes for tennis across the area, such as 'Tennis in the Park' which provides free and subsidised tennis coaching at 7 different parks in the Haringey borough. The club intend to further this outreach to provide accessible and free padel court sessions.

Other onsite operations and social events are not covered by this application. Licensing matters are separate to planning and licenses have been sought where required. The existing café use is ancillary to the sport and recreation use on site and not part of this application.

Environmental impacts

A number of residents raised concerns for impacts related to ecology and bats. The site is a SINC grade I, a non-statutory designation but is protected by local planning policies. As such, the proposed development has considered any impacts for local ecology and protected species.

The application for the approved courts included a Preliminary Ecology Appraisal which found that the "*proposals do not impact foraging and commuting habitat*" and recommended conditions for the floodlighting to mitigate any impact for bats. The proposed coverings should not alter this arrangement and cause new unacceptable impacts for onsite ecology, as confirmed in the bat and light assessment as part of this application. The earlier Preliminary Ecology Appraisal found no evidence of wild mammals and protected species, outside of bats and nesting birds, on site.

A revised Bat Survey accompanied the submission of this application. The survey confirmed that only one tree had potential for bat roosting activity. The survey recommended that further surveys be conducted in the bat season. This could be added as an informative to any grant of permission to mitigate any impact on the protected species.

The Lighting Impact Assessment included analysis of the impact for bat roosting activity. The lighting would be unchanged from the allowed floodlighting, which are angled away from sensitive areas including the tree. The Assessment confirmed that the illumination levels would be below the recommended thresholds for bats.

Several comments sought clarity on the impact for drainage and surface water. The canopies would be complete with a gutter and rainwater pipe to reduce run off from the canopies. The

gutters could be connected to the existing surface water drainage channels adjacent to the courts. This would reduce the risk of surface water flooding.

Several comments refer to the loss of the “green space” as a result of this proposal. The entirety of the red line site is hardstanding and built form, comprised of padel courts with all-weather surface and screening. As such, there would be no loss of green space and the surrounding tree cover and greenery would remain and aid in screening the visual impact of the canopy.

Procedure

The creation of ‘precedent’, particularly within the MOL, was a concern of many residents who responded to the application. All planning applications must be determined on their own merits. There needs to be a consistency of decision making and application of policy, whilst considering the specific circumstances of each site and proposal. In order for a ‘precedent’ to exist, there has to be evidence of a real likelihood that similar applications would be submitted. By virtue of the site’s unique characteristics, we do not believe a comparable presents itself within the immediate area. The LPA would successfully be able to resist any development which could be shown to be likely to cause demonstrable harm.

There were some concerns raised regarding the procedure and application type. The letter written on behalf of CREOS referred to the planning permission for the approved and existing padel courts and the creation of a ‘Pilkington’ scenario (in reference to *Pilkington v Secretary of State for the Environment* [1973] 1 WLR 1527).

‘Pilkington’ refers to a subsequent application which made an earlier permission impossible to implement. This is not the case here as the approved 2024 permission is already implemented. The current proposal is a new and separate application which would add to the existing padel offer on site.

The letter also referred to the ‘bundling’ of applications. Planning applications seeking part retrospective and part proposed development are a legitimate route to formalise development, as is the case for the pickleball courts, which were painted onto the existing approved hard standing. It provides the LPA with greater clarity in terms of being able to control approved development under one planning decision. It is an entirely appropriate mechanism.

3. Response to and reinforcement of positive comments

While acknowledging the concerns of objectors (referenced above), the majority of comments received are in support of the proposal. The responses have supported the need for coverings,

the improvements for mental and physical health, and social impact. There have also been several comments on the design, protection for nature and openness and safety.

These comments align with the content of the planning statement, which confirms that there is a high demand for covered sports provision in the area and no covered padel courts within Haringey.

Several comments mentioned the improvements for accessibility and the need for coverings to reduce risk of injury. The planning statement supported the provision of coverings to increase accessibility to the sport, particularly for older residents and people with limited mobility.

A large number of supporting comments found that the existing padel courts had a significant impact to improving mental and physical health, as well as outlining the social aspect and sense of community afforded. The social aspect is a large part of padel, and the benefits of the sport are a key driver in the application and motivation for offering free access to local community groups and schools.

A number of responses felt that the proposed canopy design would offer little impact for openness or visual impact, feeling that the design would be in keeping with the existing courts and fencing, would be screened by the tree boundary, and would not result in any loss of green space. The canopy would allow for better use of the existing courts with no loss to existing greenery or biodiversity. The VIA confirmed there would be a neutral impact for openness and visual impacts would be limited to views immediately adjacent to the courts.

A small number of residents mentioned that the increased activity associated with more users at night and in periods of inclement weather would increase passive surveillance and safety for users of the PROW at these times.

4. Summary

The proposal has evolved in response to the comments and feedback. Further community hours have been pledged, and the club has offered time to additional local community groups.

Further attention has been paid to issues such as drainage and noise impacts as a result of conversations at the public engagement event and written responses.

On balance, the proposal accords with the local development plan and the NPPF. The development should be considered appropriate development in the MOL and incorporates Very Special Circumstances with a substantial amount of free community hours of court use. The canopies are designed to preserve openness and translucency and mitigate unacceptable neighbouring amenity impacts.

The club remain keen to engage and work with residents in the process to determination and, should permission be granted, in the construction and continued operations of the courts.

Georgians Tennis Club are excited to work with the local community to keep bringing fun and social ways to keep fit and active year-round and make padel and the wider Shepherds Cot playing fields a place to come and enjoy for a wide range of residents.

Yours sincerely,

WEA Planning