



Officer Report

Application Number:	HGY/2026/0579
Application Type:	Full planning permission
Address:	Georgians Tennis Club, Crouch End Playing Fields, Haringey, London, N8 8JJ
Proposal:	Erection of all-weather canopies over 3 no. padel courts (proposed) and installation of 2no. pickleball courts (retrospective).
Case Officer:	Nathan Keyte
Valid Date:	02/03/2026
Applicant:	Jonathan Jarrett
Agent:	Mr - Avery

1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This application seeks planning permission for the erection of all-weather canopies over three proposed padel courts and the retrospective installation of two pickleball courts.

The canopies would have a maximum height of approximately 9.0m at the apex and 6.5m at the eaves, with a length of 36m and a width of 10.5m. The canopy material would comprise high-tenacity, semi-translucent fabric.

The proposed pickleball courts would be located on existing hardstanding and would consist solely of painted court markings and moveable netting to facilitate play. The proposed opening hours would be consistent with the existing tennis court operating hours, namely 7:00am to 10:00pm.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The application site relates to a tennis club known as the Georgians Tennis Club, located within Crouch End Playing Fields. The site comprises a tennis club with buildings, tennis courts, scattered trees and is bordered by North Middlesex Cricket Club and Wood Vale Lawn Tennis Club to the north, Crouch End Cricket Club to the east, Highgate Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club to the south and woodland to the west.

The site was granted permission under application reference HGY/2024/1839 for the conversion of three existing tennis courts to four padel courts, including the installation of associated fencing and lighting. The padel courts have since been constructed. The site is also bordered to the north by Greenways public walk and Shepherds Lane to the south.

Within the wider area known as Crouch End Playing Fields are other tennis and cricket clubs, allotments and areas of open space, all of which provide both formal and informal recreational opportunities. As identified in the 2015 Haringey Urban Character Study, Crouch End Playing Fields comprise a large publicly accessible recreational space and is an important green lung within a densely developed urban area of the borough, performing both recreational and ecological functions and forming part of a wider network of open spaces and green corridors connected to Queen's Wood and Highgate Wood.

In terms of planning designations, the site is located within Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) as well as being designated as a Grade 1 Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The site is not located within a Conservation Area.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT HISTORY

As set out below the site's planning history has been taken into account in determining this application:

- HGY/1994/1227 – Erection of steel portal framed single storey tennis clubhouse to replace that previously destroyed by fire – approved with conditions 08-11-1994.
- HGY/2008/0801 – Erection of container between thick existing shrubbery, on north and west side, and clubhouse – approved with conditions 03-06-2008.
- HGY/2013/0039 - Erection of translucent polythene membrane inflatable dome to cover three tennis courts – not determined – Dismissed at appeal APP/Y5420/A/13/2198650.
- HGY/2021/1910 – Approval of details pursuant to condition 3 (Preliminary ecological appraisal) attached to planning permission HGY/2021/0916 – Approved 24-08-21.
- HGY/2021/0916 – Installation of 6 no. floodlights to tennis court – Approved with conditions 19-03-21.
- HGY/2023/2001 – Removal of 3 trees – approved 18-08-2023
- HGY/2024/1839 - Conversion of three existing tennis courts to four padel courts, including installation of associated fencing and lighting; alterations to the existing ancillary club/gym building including new windows and installation of cladding – Approved with conditions 10-10-2024.

4. CONSULTATION RESPONSE

The responses below (summarised) were received following consultation of the application:

Internal:

LBH Transportation – Additional detail sought regarding impacts from operation and usage in terms of trip generation.

LBH Lighting – No objections raised.

LBH Arboricultural Officer - Proposal would need to demonstrate installation of additional poles and canopy would not result in impacts to neighbouring trees.

External:

Sport England – No objection. States the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) are supportive of proposal. Submitted documents do not contain sufficient detail to confirm compliance with structural matters/ dimensions of play.

Shepherds Cot Trust – Proposal not considered suitable and should be refused. Concern for precedent, and visual impacts of canopies. The Trust are freeholders for the land, and the application was submitted in breach of a clause in the lease.

Crouch End Open Space and Playing Fields – Objects. The canopies do not preserve the openness of the land, very special circumstances are not met, breaches of planning permission including introduction of a café use and procedural concerns with including retrospective permission with proposed works, ecological impacts from noise and lighting upon bats, referral to Mayor of London considered. Concerns for precedent being set for other clubs to seek similar structures if granted. [Officer comment: points relating to the café use are not subject to the current application. There is an associated application relating to the café use under case reference HGY/2026/2184. Regarding referral to the GLA, this has taken place, with the GLA satisfied a decision can be made at the Council level].

Mayor of London – Council may proceed to determine the application without further reference to the GLA.

Hornsey Historical Society – Objects. Proposal would harm the character of Crouch End Playing Fields, concerns for impacts on transport, noise and other matters for site and surroundings. Very Special Circumstances not considered to be satisfied.

5. LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

The application has been publicised by the way of letters and public notices. The number of representations received from neighbours, local groups, etc in response to notification and publicity of the application were as follows:

Objections: 209

Support: 214

Representations: 1

Objections raised material to planning:

- Inappropriate development within Metropolitan Open Land and alleged harm to openness.
- Visual impact on the character and appearance of Shepherds Cot and Crouch End Playing Fields.
- Impact on biodiversity, wildlife and the adjoining SINC.
- Intensification of use resulting in increased noise, lighting, traffic and activity.
- Surface water drainage and flood risk implications.
- Impact on public amenity and the enjoyment of adjacent public open space.
- Concerns regarding precedent and cumulative urbanisation of the MOL.
- Planning implications of the retrospective pickleball courts

Objections raised non-material to planning:

- Commercial motives and profit
- Cost and exclusivity of the sport of padel
- Business practices and club management
- Competition with other sports
- Ownership and private equity investors
- Restrictive covenants and lease matters

6. MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The main planning considerations raised by the proposed development are:

1. Principle of Development;
2. Design & Appearance & Impact on MOL;
3. Impact on neighbouring amenity;
4. Ecology & Wildlife & Trees;
5. Transport Considerations; and
6. Other matters

Principle of Development

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's approach to protecting Green Belt land. It identifies a limited number of forms of development that may be regarded as not inappropriate, including appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, provided the impact on the openness of the Green Belt is minimised and the development does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

Development that does not fall within these categories is treated as inappropriate development, which is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in Very Special Circumstances (VSC). The NPPF makes clear that VSC will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other material considerations and in turn establishes a deliberately high policy threshold.

The 2021 London Plan affords Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) the same level of protection as Green Belt. Policy G3 (Metropolitan Open Land) requires MOL to be protected from inappropriate development and states that proposals should be refused except in Very Special Circumstances. The policy confirms that MOL should be maintained as predominantly open land and that only appropriate open-space uses and small-scale ancillary facilities supporting outdoor recreation may be acceptable, and only where they do not harm the openness of MOL. The London Plan therefore establishes a strong presumption against development that introduces built form, enclosure or visual intrusion within MOL.

In turn Local planning authorities are required to assess proposals on MOL against this combined national and strategic policy framework and where development is considered inappropriate, applicants must demonstrate VSC capable of clearly outweighing the harm to openness and any other identified harm. In line with national policy and case law, factors such as operational convenience, user comfort or general sporting benefits do not normally amount to VSC unless there are exceptional and compelling circumstances.

Furthermore, Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD) Policy DM20 relates to Open Space and Green Grid. The Policy states that proposals for ancillary development on open space will be supported where they are necessary for or would facilitate the proper functioning of the open space, are of an appropriate scale, and do not detract from the open character of the site or surroundings and contribute positively to the setting and quality of the open space. The reconfiguration of open space will be supported where it is a part of a comprehensive deliverable scheme, achieve enhancements to address identified deficiencies in the capacity quality and accessibility of open space and secure its

viable future, and would not be detrimental to any environmental functioning of the space.

Demand for Padel and the Nature of the Use

In determining this case it is important to distinguish between the principle of padel as a recreational use and the acceptability of the proposed canopy structures. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) has already accepted the principle of padel at this site through the grant of planning permission under application reference HGY/2024/1839, for the conversion of three tennis courts to four padel courts. Consequently, there is no dispute that padel is a legitimate and increasingly popular outdoor sport capable of broadening sporting opportunities and increasing participation.

The LPA also accepts that covering courts may facilitate greater year-round use, increase participation during periods of inclement weather and support additional community access opportunities. However, the principal issue raised by the current application is not the acceptability of padel itself, but whether the erection of substantial canopy structures within MOL constitutes appropriate development and, if not, whether any identified benefits amount to VSC capable of outweighing the resulting harm.

While padel is regarded as an emerging and increasingly popular sport, it remains fundamentally an outdoor recreational activity and the applicant has not provided quantified or locally specific evidence demonstrating that covered courts are essential to the operation of the use at this site which has only recently commenced. Rather, the proposal principally seeks to improve playing conditions and increase the reliability of year-round use, and while such matters may attract weight in favour of the proposal, they do not automatically amount to Very Special Circumstances – which is discussed further in the assessment below.

Appeal Decisions and the Current Policy Position

The submitted Planning Statement outlines a number of appeal decisions whereby canopies have been allowed across the country, including within London. It is noted also that an example has also been provided of a delegated decision for padel courts and canopies under the 2026 NPPF, located within Hounslow. However, the extent to which those decisions relate to circumstances directly comparable to the current proposal is unclear, particularly given the site-specific considerations that arise in relation to the MOL in question, its size and landscape character and openness. As such each application must be assessed on its own planning merits having regard to its particular context.

The applicant has referred to a number of decisions made under earlier versions of national policy (NPPF 2023). An addendum (dated 11 September 2026) was also provided by the agent following the release of the 2026 NPPF. Officers acknowledge that the wording of Green Belt policy has evolved, with earlier versions of the 2023

NPPF requiring qualifying development to preserve the openness of the Green Belt, whereas the current August 2026 NPPF refers to minimising impacts on openness.

Notwithstanding this change in wording, the LPA does not consider that the underlying policy approach has materially altered in the context of this application. The current NPPF continues to afford substantial protection to Green Belt land and, by extension, MOL, while London Plan Policy G3 remains unchanged. Accordingly, although the wording of the national policy test has evolved, the assessment of whether development gives rise to an unacceptable impact on openness remains a central consideration and one to which significant weight must continue to be attached.

As a counterbalance to appeal decisions highlighted by the applicant the LPA would also highlight a decision at Power League, Bobby Moore Way, Muswell Hill, N10, which is located immediately adjacent to the London Borough of Haringey boundary and therefore provides a recent and locally relevant example. In this case the Inspector accepted that padel courts represented an appropriate outdoor sporting use but nevertheless concluded that the associated canopies would fail to preserve the openness of MOL and that the benefits advanced were insufficient to amount to VSC, resulting in the appeal being dismissed.

While it is accepted that each case must be assessed on its own merits, this decision demonstrates that support for the underlying sporting use does not automatically justify associated canopy structures within MOL and that detailed consideration must still be given to openness and the existence of VSC.

Crouch End Playing Fields – Site Specific Context

In considering this case and context the LPA would also highlight a 2014 appeal decision (Ref: APP/Y5420/A/13/2198650) to erect an inflatable translucent polythene dome to cover three tennis at Holly Park Tennis Club for 6 months of the year, which was dismissed on appeal. While fully accepting that such an inflatable dome is materially different in appearance in terms of size and surface area, this decision was ultimately dismissed due to the harm identified to openness and the character and appearance of the area, with the Inspector accepted that the proposal would provide opportunities for increased participation in sport and more efficient year-round use of the courts.

The appeal decision acknowledges how the appeal site is one of a number of recreational/sporting facilities within the area of MOL, with the immediate landscape a patchwork of open recreational fields and hard surfaced sports pitches accessible by tree lined roads and paths, including the footpath that connects Woodvale and Park Road. The Inspector highlighted how the dome would be clearly viewed from the adjacent public footpath and in some longer distance views from higher ground and in turn how the shape and materials of the dome would not complement the established character of the area.

In balancing the harm against the benefits, the Inspector noted that the enclosure would improve the club's facilities by enabling year-round play and increasing opportunities for the local community, schools, club members and other regular users, including school programmes, disability tennis initiatives, work experience, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, coach education, competitive play and access to subsidised coaching. However, the Inspector ultimately attached only moderate weight to these benefits, acknowledging that increased opportunities for year-round participation in tennis and physical activity would support wider health and community objectives, these benefits were nevertheless not considered sufficient to outweigh the identified harm to the openness of the MOL and the character and appearance of the area.

This appeal decision remains highly relevant, particularly in the weight it attributes to the openness of Crouch End Playing Fields and its recognition that this space comprises a diverse range of open recreational and sporting facilities and landscape features. In turn the 2015 Haringey Urban Character Study, as referenced above, also places significant value on the area's landscape character, recreational function and environmental quality. As such, these considerations are of considerable importance in the determination of the current application and have been weighed against the benefits advanced in support of the proposal, namely increased sporting participation, improved year-round use of the facilities and additional community access opportunities. These matters are considered as part of the planning balance required by the NPPF 2026 and are assessed in the following section of this report, after consideration of the siting, design, materiality and landscape impact of the proposed canopies are discussed.

Metropolitan benefit and Cumulative Impacts

Given, as outlined above, that Crouch End Playing Fields comprises a range of recreational and sporting facilities within a single area of MOL, the LPA considers it necessary to assess the proposal in the wider context of the playing fields as a whole. The benefits arising from covered courts at an individual facility must be balanced against the cumulative implications that similar development could have for the openness, character and function of the MOL.

It is noted that, if similar coverings were to be introduced across a number of sporting facilities within the playing fields, the cumulative effect could materially erode the open character of the area and undermine the objectives of the MOL designation. Given the variety of sporting facilities operating within Crouch End Playing Fields, the benefits advanced in support of the current proposal could equally apply to a number of other clubs and facilities within the wider MOL. The planning submission does not explain why the extent of covered court provision proposed should be viewed as a one-off exception, rather than part of a wider pattern of development that could, over time, materially alter the openness and character of the playing fields. In this regard, the planning submission provides only limited

justification as to why the extent of covered courts proposed should attract significant weight when considered in the context of the wider recreational and sporting provision available across Crouch End Playing Fields.

The LPA therefore considers that the claimed benefits should be assessed not only at the level of the individual club, but also in the context of Crouch End Playing Fields as a whole, given its strategic role and the long-term importance of safeguarding its openness, character and function as Metropolitan Open Land. In this respect, the LPA notes that, in parallel with the current application, a separate application has been submitted by Hornsey Cricket Club for the use of former tennis courts as covered and illuminated padel courts, following an earlier permission for their use as open-air padel courts. This demonstrates the need to consider the cumulative implications of similar proposals across the wider MOL, rather than assessing each facility in isolation.

Design, Appearance & Impact on MOL

London Plan (2021) policies emphasise the importance of high-quality design and seek to optimise site capacity through a design-led approach. Policy D3 'Delivering Good Design' states that development proposals should enhance local context by delivering buildings and spaces that positively respond to local distinctiveness through their layout, orientation, scale, appearance and form, with due regard to street hierarchy, building types, built form and proportions.

Local Plan Policy SP11 (2017) and Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD) Policy DM1 seek to secure the highest standard of design that respects local context and character and contributes to the creation and enhancement of Haringey's sense of place and identity. DPD Policy DM1 'Delivering High Quality Design' requires development proposals to have regard to a range of criteria, including building height, form, scale and massing, prevailing character, urban grain, sense of enclosure, building lines, the rhythm of plots and building widths, active frontages and the use of distinctive local architectural styles, detailing and materials.

In the specific context of MOL and as referred to above, the NPPF and London Plan Policy G3 require that development maintains openness and minimises visual intrusion and while appropriate facilities for outdoor sport may be acceptable in principle, such facilities must remain genuinely ancillary to the outdoor use and be designed so that any impact on openness is minimised. Therefore, the assessment is not limited to architectural quality alone but must also consider the extent to which the proposed structures would introduce built form, enclosure and visual prominence within an area whose primary characteristic is that of openness.

The proposal would result in large areas of this historic tennis court facility being covered, introducing substantial built form, height and visual enclosure and as such it is not possible to characterise the canopies as a minor ancillary addition to the existing use. While it is acknowledged that the structure would remain open-sided and that the experience would differ from a fully enclosed building, the development would nevertheless represent a significant departure from the essentially outdoor character of the existing courts.

Whilst the LPA acknowledges that the canopies have been designed as open-sided structures and would utilise a lightweight, partially translucent fabric covering, these measures are not considered sufficient to minimise the impact on openness to an acceptable degree. The assessment of openness extends beyond whether a structure is fully enclosed and requires consideration of its scale, massing, visual presence and the extent to which it introduces a perception of enclosure within an otherwise open landscape. In this case, the cumulative effect of the canopy height, footprint, supporting framework and prominent roof form would remain readily apparent and would materially alter the open character of this part of the MOL.

The application is supported by a Visual Impact Appraisal prepared by Neaves Urbanism, which concludes that, although the canopies would be visible, their lightweight and translucent design would retain a perception of visual openness across the site. The submitted Planning Statement further states that the structures would be substantially screened from wider views during the summer months by surrounding tree cover, with moderate to minor effects during winter months.

While these points are noted, it is nevertheless considered that the canopies would be highly visible in this location due to their scale, profile, height and material appearance, particularly its white partially translucent finish. While it is acknowledged that a degree of enclosure already exists by virtue of the approved padel court enclosures, the impact on openness arising from those works was assessed under application reference HGY/2024/1839 and found to be acceptable, having regard to the limited scale of the enclosures and relatively lightweight and visually permeable design nature.

Here the proposed canopies would be perceptible from a range of public vantage points, drawing the eye and interrupting views across the site, including views towards the surrounding tree canopy and the wider open landscape that characterises this part of the MOL. Furthermore, the canopies will be particularly visible during the winter months when the tree cover reduces. While the application distinguishes the current proposal from the previously dismissed appeal scheme (APP/Y5420/A/13/2198650), as discussed above, and for which the LPA accept are different in nature, the canopies would nevertheless remain highly noticeable to users of adjoining footpaths and Crouch End Playing Fields during both summer and

winter months. The LPA would argue that the integrated lighting would further accentuate the prominence of the structures, particularly during the darker months of the year, increasing their visual presence within the wider landscape.

Taken together, the proposed canopies would result in a clear and material reduction in openness, both spatially and visually, the impact of which is not considered to be sufficiently minimised through the choice of design, materials or overall form. Considering the particular location and the size and nature of the Crouch End Playing Fields, it is difficult to envision a proposal for canopies on the site that would overcome the concerns to visual impacts and openness of the area raised above. As such, the proposal would cause harm to the openness and character of the MOL, to which substantial weight must be attached in the planning balance.

Very Special Circumstances (VSC)

The applicant advances a range of benefits in support of the proposal, including increased year-round use of the courts, greater certainty of access during periods of inclement weather, additional participation in sport and the provision of community benefits. In a letter dated 22 May 2026, submitted in response to consultation comments, the applicant states that it is committed to providing up to 20 hours of free court use each week to local community groups, including local schools, NHS staff and organisations supporting mental health and wellbeing. It is further stated that improved utilisation of the courts during winter months would help fund and sustain this community access programme.

The LPA accepts that these are material considerations that weigh in favour of the proposal. Increased opportunities for participation in sport, physical activity and community engagement are capable of delivering social, health and wellbeing benefits, and the proposed community use programme would provide a degree of public benefit to local groups and organisations. The LPA also accepts that the canopies would likely increase court utilisation during periods of poor weather and facilitate more reliable year-round use of the facility.

However, these benefits are not considered exceptional in nature and are broadly similar to those advanced in support of the dismissed 2014 appeal at Holly Park Tennis Club, discussed above, where the Inspector accepted that year-round play, increased participation in sport, community access opportunities and wider health benefits weighed in favour of the proposal, but ultimately afforded those benefits only moderate weight in the planning balance. The Inspector nevertheless concluded that the benefits did not clearly outweigh the identified harm to the openness of the MOL and the character and appearance of the area.

Similarly, while the canopies are stated to increase the usability of the facility during periods of bad weather and over the winter months, no substantive evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the continued operation or viability of the club depends upon covered courts. Nor has it been demonstrated that the benefits claimed are unique to this location, exceptional in nature or incapable of being delivered elsewhere outside designated MOL. The proposal would enclose a substantial part of the historic tennis court area, and it has not been shown that such an intervention is necessary to sustain the sporting use of the site.

Given the value attached to the openness, landscape character and recreational function of Crouch End Playing Fields, as recognised by the 2015 Haringey Urban Character Study and the findings of the 2014 Holly Park Tennis Club appeal decision, as discussed above the LPA's view is that substantial weight to the protection of the openness, character and function of this space in Crouch End needs to be given. Such concerns are also reflected in objections received from Shepherds Cot Trust and Crouch End Open Space (CREOS), who highlight how the playing fields have existed in an essentially open form for over 100 years, with only limited built development, and in turn considers the proposed canopies would be harmful to the character of the site.

As highlighted above the proposal would introduce a prominent and permanent structure into a sensitive area of MOL and would result in harm to openness, both spatially and visually. In addition, the LPA would highlight the claimed benefits for the proposal could equally be advanced by other sporting facilities operating within the wider MOL, such that the cumulative implications of similar development are a relevant consideration.

Taking all matters into account, the LPA affords moderate weight to the sporting, community and health benefits identified by the applicant, however, these benefits are not considered sufficient to either individually or cumulatively outweigh the substantial weight that must be attached to the harm arising from the loss of openness and the resulting conflict with national and London Plan policies that seek to protect MOL. Accordingly, the LPA view that VSC have not been demonstrated and the proposal fails to meet this high policy threshold required to justify inappropriate development within MOL.

Pickleball use

For clarity, the proposed pickleball courts are considered to be appropriate development by virtue of their small scale, open nature and the fact that the associated netting is not fixed permanent built form. The pickleball facilities would be sited on an existing hard-surfaced area and are considered complementary to the established recreational use of the site.

Impact on neighbouring amenity

London Plan Policy D6 outlines that design must not be detrimental to the amenity of surrounding housing, in specific stating that proposals should provide sufficient daylight and sunlight to surrounding housing that is appropriate for its context, while also minimising overshadowing.

DPD Policy DM1 'Delivering High Quality Design' states that development proposals must ensure a high standard of privacy and amenity for a development's users and neighbours. Specifically, proposals are required to provide appropriate sunlight, daylight and aspects to adjacent buildings and land, and to provide an appropriate amount of privacy to neighbouring properties to avoid overlooking and loss of privacy and detriment to amenity of neighbouring resident.

The proposed development would not give rise to any direct impacts on neighbouring residential amenity. The site is located within the wider expanse of Crouch End Playing Fields and is well separated from the nearest residential properties. Furthermore, the proposal would not alter the approved hours of operation (07:00 to 22:00 daily) or introduce any new use of the site beyond that already approved. As such, no material harm to the living conditions of nearby residents is identified.

Ecology & Wildlife & Trees

Policy G6 requires new developments to make a positive contribution to the protection, enhancement, creation and management of biodiversity wherever possible. Local Plan Policy SP13 states that where possible, development should make a positive contribution to the protection, enhancement, creation and management of biodiversity and should protect and enhance Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). Furthermore, paragraph 125 of the NPPF states that "By encouraging good design, planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation".

London Plan Policy G7 requires existing trees of value to be retained, and any removal to be compensated by adequate replacement. This policy further sets out that planting of new trees, especially those with large canopies, should be included within development proposals.

The site is designated as a Grade 1 Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and, unlike the earlier application for the padel courts, no updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been submitted in support of the current proposal. Instead,

the application relies on the ecological information previously considered as part of the approved development, together with an updated Bat Roost Potential Tree and Building Inspection Survey prepared by Sylvatica Ecology and a Lighting Assessment prepared by EPS (February 2026). The updated bat survey is principally concerned with the potential for bat roosts within trees and buildings and does not specifically assess the implications of the proposed canopy structure on bat foraging or commuting behaviour.

While the submitted assessments conclude that impacts on bats and other wildlife would be negligible, it is noted that the approved lighting scheme was originally assessed in the context of open courts rather than courts located beneath a canopy structure. Although the submitted lighting drawings indicate that light spill would remain largely contained within the covered court area, notwithstanding the canopy material being described as partially translucent, limited explanation has been provided as to how the presence of the canopy may influence the distribution of artificial light or whether it could alter the effects previously assessed in relation to bat foraging and commuting routes.

Notwithstanding this, ecological impacts associated with lighting were previously considered acceptable as part of the approved padel court development and given that the court lighting is designed to be directed downwards towards the playing surface rather than upwards, and the canopies are proposed to be formed from a partially translucent material, there is no substantive evidence before the LPA to suggest that the proposal would give rise to significant additional ecological impacts when compared with the approved open-court arrangement. However, as the updated bat survey does not specifically assess the implications of the canopy structure on bat foraging and commuting behaviour, had the application otherwise been recommended for approval further clarification would reasonably have been sought on this matter.

Transport Considerations

London Plan Policy T1 requires all development to make the most effective use of land, reflecting its connectivity and accessibility by existing and future public transport, walking and cycling routes, and to ensure that any impacts on London's transport networks and supporting infrastructure are mitigated. Policies T4, T5 and T6 set out key principles for the assessment of development impacts on the highway network in terms of trip generation, parking demand and cycling provision.

Local Plan Policy SP7 'Transport' states that the Council aims to tackle climate change, improve local place shaping and public realm, and environmental and transport quality and safety by promoting public transport, walking, cycling, and seeking to locate major trip generating developments in locations with good access to public transport. This is supported by DPD Policy DM31 'Sustainable Transport'.

The site has a low PTAL value of 1A, considered 'poor' access to public transport services.

While the proposed canopies are intended to facilitate more reliable year-round use of the courts during periods of poor weather, the development would not materially increase the overall capacity of the facility and is therefore unlikely to result in a significant uplift in trips beyond those already anticipated as part of the approved padel use. As such having regard to the nature of the proposal and the absence of any change to the approved parking arrangements, it is not considered that the development would result in unacceptable impacts on the local highway network, parking conditions or transport infrastructure.

Other matters

Objections have raised concerns regarding surface water drainage and flooding. However, the proposal would not introduce any additional impermeable surfaces and, as such, would not be expected to materially increase surface water runoff. Any rainfall collected by the proposed canopies would be managed through the site's existing drainage arrangements and discharged in a controlled manner, with no evidence to suggest that the development would give rise to increased flood risk either on the site or elsewhere.

Conclusion

This application follows on from application HGY/2024/1839, which established the principle of the use of the site for padel courts. While the proposed pickleball courts are considered acceptable by virtue of their small scale and open nature, the proposed canopies would introduce substantial built form, enclosure and visual prominence within a sensitive area of MOL, resulting in harm to its openness and character.

Although the proposal would provide sporting, community and health benefits through increased year-round use and community access opportunities, these benefits are afforded only moderate weight and are not considered sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm identified. Given the significant importance of safeguarding the openness, landscape character and recreational function of Crouch End Playing Fields, the LPA concludes that Very Special Circumstances have not been demonstrated and the proposal is therefore contrary to national, London Plan and local planning policies relating to the protection of MOL.

In reaching this recommendation, the Council has had full regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and is satisfied that the decision to refuse planning permission would not result in any disproportionate

impact upon persons with protected characteristics. The Council has also taken into account the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and considers that the decision represents a proportionate response in pursuit of a legitimate planning objective, namely the protection of Metropolitan Open Land.

Having regard to the considerations set out above, this application is recommended for refusal for the reason detailed below.

7. CIL APPLICABLE

N/A due to nature of application proposed.

8. BNG

Not applicable, as no change to permeable area or removal of vegetation is proposed.

9. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION for the following reason:

1. The proposed introduction of all-weather canopies, by reason of their enclosing form, materiality, visual prominence and siting within this part of Crouch End Playing Fields, would result in highly visible and conspicuous structures that would harm the openness, character and historic open nature of this Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). While the proposal would provide additional sporting, community and health benefits through increased year-round use of the courts, these benefits are not considered sufficient to clearly outweigh the identified harm. Furthermore, the proposal would create a risk of similar canopies and enclosures being sought at other sporting and recreational facilities within the wider MOL, resulting in cumulative harm to the openness, character and function of Crouch End Playing Fields. Accordingly, the proposal constitutes inappropriate development within MOL for which the very special circumstances necessary to justify approval have not been demonstrated and is therefore contrary to Policy G3 of the London Plan (2021), Policies SP11 and SP13 of the Haringey Local Plan, Policies DM1 and DM20 of the Haringey Development Management DPD, and the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).