

Cantelowes Gardens Padel tennis court proposal

Planning Statement

Cantelowes Gardens

The park was created in 1959, as a 'New Park on Historic Site' (manor of Cantelowes). It was opened as a London County Council park, later transferred to Camden in 1968, and from its outset as a public park aimed to provide a range of facilities for local people – including bowls, skating and musical performances. It is now a neighbourhood recreational park (1.5 Hectares) managed by Camden Council, and continues to cater for a wide range of user groups and supporting people being active:

- A two-generation floodlit artificial football pitch. 39.7m x 29.7m which is used by a local school for PE lessons every weekday, young people and girls sports development late afternoon and bookable for the public in the evenings and weekends.
- Changing pavilion building/office and public toilet
- A large and well regarded free skate park including a concrete bowl and further street skate sections which is well used by a range of users.
- Outdoor gym, and basketball hoops
- Children's playarea, sandpit, dog walking area, wildflower meadow, paths and areas of grass lawn

We are proposing to install a padel court next to the pavilion building at Cantelowes Gardens as we believe it would be complementary and supplementary to the existing facilities in the park. This location would be acoustically and partly visually shielded for residents and park users, as it faces the railway track.

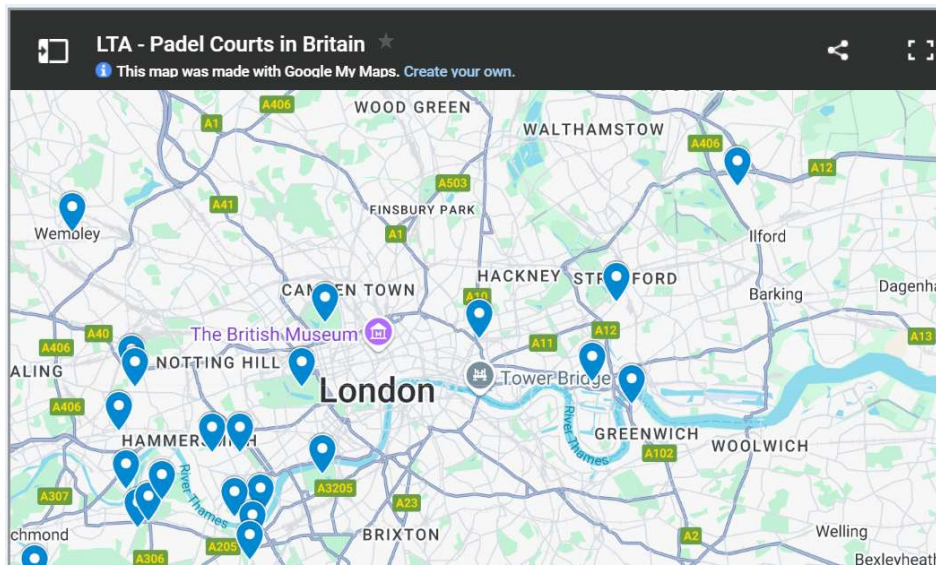
The Bio Diversity Net Gain impact of the padel court installation has been considered and the metric run to confirm that a net gain will be possible in terms of habitat and hedgerow creation.

The arboricultural impact assessment carried out recommended the removal of one tree, and we are therefore proposing 3 new trees following consultation with our Tree planting officer.

Community need

Padel tennis is fun, easy to learn and extremely sociable new racket sport. It is played on an enclosed court about a third the size of a tennis court, groups of mixed ages and abilities can play together.

There is currently a lack of padel courts in North London, and we are aware of significant demand. [Find a Padel court in Britain | LTA](#). Padel tennis and Women's football (also delivered at Cantelowes Gardens) are the fastest growing sports in the UK. Padel is the fastest growing sport in the world (Lawn Tennis Association).



Camden has 3 sites for park tennis, all of which are busy. In 2023/24, there were over 21,600 bookings, occupancy of the courts at Waterlow were 54%, Lincoln's Inn Fields 51% and Kilburn Grange 43% over the year. The LTA have confirmed these occupancy rates are good for park tennis courts.

We believe a padel court at Canteloves Gardens would be the first padel court to be built in the Borough and one of the first affordable padel courts to be located in a public park in the UK.

A park padel court could support Camden's goal to encourage more people to exercise, especially those with lower levels of activity in the borough. There is strong evidence about how exercising outdoors releases both mental and physical health benefits, which in turn plays a key role in preventing serious health conditions in the long term.

Camden's State of the Borough Report 2024, State of Missions: "By 2030, Camden's estates and their neighbourhoods are healthy, sustainable and unlock creativity." [State-of-the-Borough-report-2024.pdf](#)

Camden's draft local plan reference. Policy SC1: Improving health and wellbeing A. The Council will continue to work closely with its partners to improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of all people who live, work in, study in and visit Camden, and reduce health inequalities.

Project proposal and Community Engagement

During 2024, officers carried out feasibility and site analysis to identify a suitable location for a padel court in one of Camden's parks. Our finding (having taken specialist advice) was that Canteloves Gardens is the best location for this facility.

Canteloves Gardens was shortlisted because:

- Padel court would complement the other 'active' park facilities (sports pitch, skate bowl, outdoor gym)
- Central Camden location – equally attractive to local residents, families and those that work and study in the area
- Site based staff - an advantage for a bookable sports pitch

- The proposed location is shielded visually and acoustically.

Public engagement

- An online survey was hosted on We are Camden website from 28th November 2024 to January 24th 2025.
- Two pop-up engagement sessions were held in the park on 8th and 13th December 2-4.00pm to meet people, allow them to try out padel on the sports pitch and talk through the proposal.
- The engagement results are available via [padelproposalcantelowesgardensengagementfeedback.pdf](#)

When asked if people supported the Padel proposal, at the end of the consultation period, 50.5% supported and 49.5% would not support the proposal. 217 responses to this question were received.

During the engagement period, there was a Camden New Journal article (23.01.25) which contained some inaccuracies about the Padel proposal and featured a 'save our sandpit' campaign featured on the front page. The article focussed on the removal of a free children's facility for a charged facility but did not reference Camden's willingness to enhance/ re-provide the sandpit, or the wider park improvement project planned for late 2025. The CNJ article caused a swing in the engagement but levelled out as the survey closed (2 days after the CNJ article):

	Yes	No
Before press (CNJ) article	54.1%	45.8%
Immediately after article	36.7%	63.3%
Final results	50.5%	49.5%

The key focus of those who were not supportive was the perceived loss of the sandpit. There were some clear shared priorities between those that supported the padel proposal and those who objected to it, including:

- Quality play facilities
- Sand and natural play for young children.
- Picnic benches
- Ensuring the park delivers for a wide range of users
- Proposed padel court be affordable

Engagement feedback to the public, has stressed that Camden is committed to re-providing a sandpit if the padel project progresses, and that all of the above priorities can be achieved via the padel project and the programmed park improvement project (Green Space Improvement Programme) for which engagement and design response will begin in June 2025.

Dated 24.03.2025