

Planning Application 2025/1301/P

Cantelowes Gardens Camden Road London NW5 2AP

Construction of 1no. outdoor all weather floodlit padel court, associated access pathway and landscaping works.

Comments Until 27-04-2025

From:

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Below I list some technical planning objections, but first and foremost, this area of Cantelowes Gardens where a padel court is proposed is a special place in our community.

The large sandpit where children enjoy natural play, a feeling of relative calm and tranquillity in the city, and an uncluttered open green space between the children's play areas, picnic benches and a large sandpit. These elements work very well together and would be spoiled by a padel court.

The sandpit is very important to the local community. It was designed by Tim Wilson for Farrer Huxley Associates and opened in 2008. It has a narrative of a meteorite crashed to earth.

Noel Farrah FLI PPLI of Farrah Huxley is an ex-president and fellow of the landscape Institute. He remarks:

“The scheme design and narrative with the boulder, sand and water is an interesting one that received much praise when put in. It has a heritage value in the development of urban playgrounds and on these grounds should be something Camden is proud of and wishing to keep.” (and maintain, perhaps...)

Objections:

### **1. Designated Local Green Space**

Cantelowes Gardens is a designated Local Green Space (LGS). It is identified in the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan, and the status is confirmed by Camden planning.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published by the Department for Communities and Local Government, most recently updated in December 2024, sets out the government's planning policies for England.

LGS is designated by the planning authority (borough, district, metropolitan or other unitary authority) and once it is in place, it is subject to the same strong development restrictions as Green Belt, ruling out new development except in special circumstances.

Para104. Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, should not be built on unless:

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

a) no, b) no, c) no. This proposed development is against the letter and spirit of a designated Local Green Space.

## **2. The Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan**

The Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan 2016 was adopted within the Camden planning policy framework in the same year.

p.7, Preserving open space

“Open spaces are vital to promoting the health and wellbeing of residents. Following public consultation, the Plan seeks to protect open spaces and encourages the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.”

p.14, Green & Open Spaces

“Development will enhance the environmental sustainability of the area through preserving and improving existing open spaces...”

p.29, GO1: LOCAL GREEN SPACES ... They will be protected from the impact of development that would result in a loss in the quantity and quality of existing public green areas which are of particular importance to the community. The enhancement of these spaces will be supported, especially if these measures improve the access and use of the spaces by individuals and groups with protected characteristics.

p.30, 5. Canteloves Gardens and Skatepark, Camden Road, NW5 2AP.

“This is an area comprising a Skatepark, which is well-used by older children from the locality, and a beautiful peaceful small park, full of wildlife and invaluable to local people in this very built-up area.”

## **3. Planning Statement**

Planning – there is a suggestion in the ‘padel court planning statement’ that “Camden is committed to re-providing a sandpit if the padel project progresses, as part of a Green Space Improvement Programme for which engagement and design response will begin in June 2025.”

How utterly absurd to propose a significant built development in Canteloves Gardens independently of the Green Space Improvement Programme plan. Any development in

Cantelowes Gardens should surely be one integrated proposal - not vaguely 're-providing a sandpit' without any indication of size, form, location, or context. That's not planning!

The remarks on the consultation web page are vacuous:

"In 2025, there will be some funding for Cantelowes Gardens via our Green Space Improvement Programme (GSIP) to make repairs and improvements to the park and its features, so we'd like to hear about some initial ideas for this too. The GSIP project will also help us pick up any issues from the Padel court installation if it goes ahead."

#### **4. We Make Camden**

The Green Space Improvement program links through to 'We Make Camden' a council document published in 2018. "In 2018, Camden came together and developed Camden 2025 – our shared vision for the future of the borough:"

Page 42 - "Living in Camden means access to local jobs, good schools, green and open spaces, arts and culture." – indeed, no mention of novel sports here.

#### **5. Bartholomew Estate Conservation Area**

Cantelowes Gardens is contiguous with the Bartholomew Estate Conservation Area. Camden's application for a 'Regulation 7 Direction' included the remark:

7.23. There are no areas of public open space within the Bartholomew Estate Conservation Area; however, Cantelowes Gardens adjoins to the east and Islip Street Playground adjoins to the north (in Kentish Town). These areas, albeit outside of the conservation area, make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. "Profile of the London Borough of Camden on a ward-by-ward basis" - 2019

#### **6. The Biodiversity Net Gain and Arboricultural Impact Assessment**

'The Biodiversity Net Gain impact of the padel court installation' and the 'The Arboricultural Impact Assessment' in the planning application are cynical annexes to the central proposal. Referring to the point regarding planning above - surely new tree planting, a new hedgerow, and extending the meadow should all be elements of the Green Space Improvement Programme, not piecemeal compensations for the loss of calm open green space and the sandpit, just to satisfy some planning guidance.

#### **7. Community Demand**

The proposal includes no evidence of community demand for a padel court that would justify the development. There's a letter from the LTA, but hardly a resounding endorsement. The consultation outcome was marginal to say the least - and one may dare to assume consultees from the local community who know the gardens would be

keen to protect the open space and sandpit, while some of those in favour of a new padel court (anywhere) in Camden might come from further away.

## **8. Exercise**

The planning statement includes the hilarious assertion, “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.”

If one takes an hour to stroll around the local neighbourhoods and consider “those with lower levels of activity” and then takes ten minutes to view some YouTube Padel videos - they are different people. This is a bonkers assertion.

## **9. Construction Materials**

The elevation plan 'Proposed Padel Court Elevations.pdf' shows, "3.0m High Clear Acrylic Perspex Panels or Glass"

LTA guidance - “In the U.K. most padel court ends comprise toughened glass rebound panels with a weld mesh section over but could comprise other materials such as rendered blockwork for the first 3.0m”

There's no mention of Acrylic Perspex in the LTA guidance. I have discovered a temporary padel court vendor which uses Polycarbonate, but that’s not Acrylic Perspex. I have found no reference to Acrylic Perspex rebound panels anywhere (well, on Google)

It seems to me this uncertainty regarding a significant part of the materialisation of the proposal requires clarification and justification. There should be detail on the acoustic and wearing properties of Acrylic Perspex, if it is to be used, with previously installed examples.

## **10. Noise**

Nuisance noise is a well documented issue with open air padel courts. The thwack of racquet on balls and balls on walls is one element of this. Some reports suggest the swearing of participants is also a problem, they can become very excited as they play. The feasibility study recognises the need to site a padel court away from residences, but it seems to have overlooked the importance of calm and quiet community green space, and the probability of inappropriate language alongside children's play facilities.

## **11. Access and Security**

Part of the justification for siting a ‘pay to play’ padel court in Cantelowes Gardens is “Site based staff - an advantage for a bookable sports pitch”. At present, I understand from Camden officers, there is a single attendant who splits his/her time between two sites and presumably enjoys a normal working week.

The proposal suggests the court will be open in the evenings and at weekends, but presently Cantelowes Gardens closes at dusk. The football pitches and skatepark have direct access to Camden Road, making out of hours access practical, but the Padel Court will not have direct access to a street.

It seems there is an essential need for an operational plan which either does not exist or has not been presented. On the face of it, the additional staff commitment (and lighting?) needed to make the (open) gardens and padel court safe and accessible after dark would be costly and has not been addressed.

## **12. Windows / glass**

The existing changing room pavilion facility in Cantelowes Gardens has steel shutters, to protect its windows and doors, which are closed overnight (and sometimes during the day). These have been installed, presumably by Camden, presumably to address a risk or history of vandalism or damage.

At the same location, the proposal under consideration is to install 100m<sup>2</sup> or so of unprotected vertical transparent wall, either of glass or Acrylic Perspex. These transparent walls will surely be attractive to vandals and after a few years (or weeks) will be rather shabby, if not destroyed, further eroding the atmosphere of our green, calm, open, lovely natural play space.

ends