



Innovative Padel Court Solutions

Planning & Design | advice | drawings | applications

PLANNING SUPPORT STATEMENT

Full Planning Permission for the installation of 2 No. padel courts under a canopy with floodlighting on an existing Multi-Use Games Area.

Site Address:

St. Helen's School
Eastbury Road
Northwood
London HA6 3AS

Applicant:

St Helen's School



Innovative Padel Court Solutions

Planning & Design | advice | drawings | applications

Contents

1.0 Introduction

2.0 The Application Site

3.0 Proposed Development

4.0 Planning Policy Context

5.0 Principle of Development

6.0 Technical Considerations

7.0 Planning Balance & Conclusion

8.0 Site Photos



Innovative Padel Court Solutions
Planning & Design | advice | drawings | applications

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the installation of two canopy covered padel courts with associated floodlighting at St Helen's School, Eastbury Road, Northwood, HA6 3AS.

1.2 The proposal seeks to repurpose an existing disused MUGA and an adjoining area of grassland to provide two modern padel courts beneath purpose-designed canopies. The development will enhance the school's sports provision, support community participation in sport, and make effective use of an underutilised area within the established school campus.

1.3 This full application has been informed by the pre-application advice issued by the London Borough of Hillingdon under reference 7402/PRC/2025/141, dated 6 November 2025.

1.4 The Council expressed support for the principle of the proposed enhanced sporting provision on the site, subject to the submission of further assessments and supporting technical information. The scheme has not been amended since the pre-application submission and remains as originally proposed.

1.5 The following information accompanies this application:

- Pre-Application Form submitted via the Planning Portal
- Location Plan – Drawing no. 001 Rev. A
- Existing Site Plan - Drawing no. 002 Rev. A
- Proposed Site Plan – Drawing no. 003 Rev. B
- Proposed Elevations – Drawing no. 004 Rev. A
- Proposed Roof Plan – Drawing no. 005 Rev. A
- Heritage Assessment by Pegasus Group
- Floodlighting Assessment by MEC
- Flood Risk & Drainage Strategy by MEC
- PEA Report & BNG Assessment by The Ecology Partnership



Innovative Padel Court Solutions

Planning & Design | advice | drawings | applications

- Acoustic Report by Peninsular Acoustics
- Tree Survey
- Draft Community Use Agreement

2.0 The Application Site

2.1 St Helen's School is a leading independent day school for girls aged 3 to 18, located on Eastbury Road in Northwood, within the London Borough of Hillingdon. Founded in 1899, the school currently has 1,200 pupils. It is renowned for combining academic excellence with a rich array of creative, sporting, and personal development opportunities set within expansive, well-equipped grounds.

2.2 The school occupies an extensive 21-acre campus comprising educational buildings, sports facilities and landscaped open space. In addition to the main school buildings, other existing facilities include sports pitches, hockey facilities, tennis courts, a swimming pool, gymnasium and associated recreational infrastructure.

2.3 The school's principal entrance is located on Eastbury Road to the west. A separate access point from Green Lane along the southern boundary provides entry to the main car park, which is situated adjacent to the sports centre. A further independent access is available from Carew Road to the north.

2.4 The school's sports facilities include a leisure complex featuring a 25-metre indoor swimming pool, opened in 2004, as well as a multi-gym and a dance studio which were completed in 2006. Outdoor sports facilities include an all-weather artificial grass pitch for football and hockey (located adjacent to the application site), five artificial grass and one hard surface MUGA (the application site) and adjoining sports field.

2.5 The application site is situated within the northern part of the campus adjacent to the existing hockey pitch and long jump track (Fig. 1). It currently comprises a

hard surfaced MUGA, previously used for both tennis and netball, enclosed by a chain-link fence (see existing site photos below)

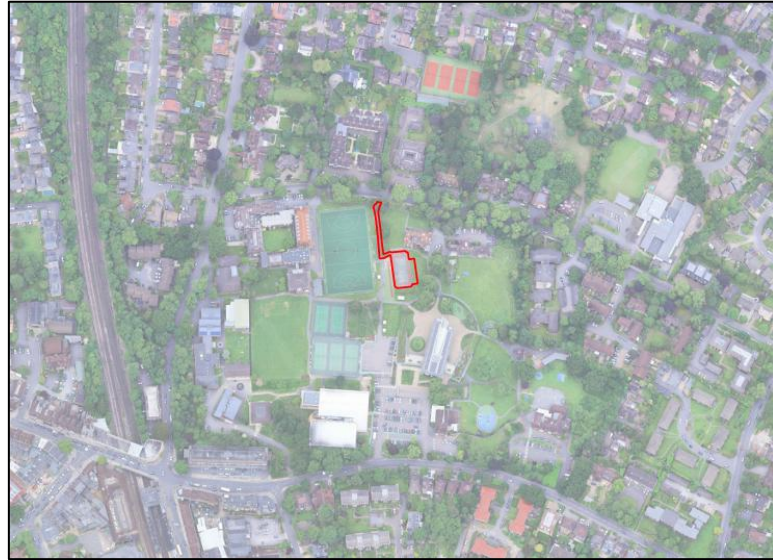


Fig.1. Location Plan

2.6 Around the perimeter of the application site, the land comprises predominantly grassland, with a row of mature trees located along the eastern boundary and a hedgerow forming the southern boundary. To the west of the site is a long jump track adjacent to an estate road, beyond which lies a hockey pitch. Two mature trees are situated near the north-western corner of the site. A 3-storey building known as Gwyer House is located close to the northern boundary and provides office and staff accommodation. The Junior School building is also located nearby to the southwest of the site.

2.8 The surrounding features collectively provide natural screening toward the residential properties on Carew Road which form the campus' northern boundary.

2.9 There are no proposals to remove any of the existing trees and hedgerow.

2.10 The site lies within the 'Northwood, Frithwood' Conservation Area but is not within the setting of any listed buildings. The wider campus contributes positively to the verdant and spacious character of the conservation area through its extensive open landscape and mature planting.

2.11 All sporting facilities are currently open to the public on a pay-and-play basis, forming an important and well-established part of the local community's recreational provision. The proposal submitted under this application would continue this approach, ensuring that the facilities remain publicly accessible and retain their valuable community function.

2.12 The following applications are considered relevant to this proposal with various similarities.

- Ref. No: 7402/APP/2018/3445 Demolition of the Fitzwalter building and construction of a new STEM building on same site. Approved March 2019
- Ref. No: 7402/APP/2016/2939 Demolition of the Claremont building and construction of a new Music Building on the same site. Approved Sep. 2017
- Ref. no. 7402/APP/2014/2761 Development of a new part two-storey and part single-storey Junior School building with associated external works. Approved Aug. 2014

3.0 Proposed Development

3.1 The proposal comprises:

- Re-purposing an existing disused MUGA hard surface court and an area of adjoining grassland;
- The installation of two padel courts measuring approximately 20m x 10m each;
- Construction of a fixed canopy structure to cover both padel courts, with a maximum height of 8.43m;

- Installation of 8 no. (4 per court) integrated LED floodlighting mounted on 6.2m columns;
- Associated drainage and landscaping works.

3.2 The area of the existing MUGA is 575 sqm. This will be replaced by two padel courts that will have an area of 525 sqm. The padel courts will be positioned side-by-side in an east-west orientation and will extend over a small area of adjoining grassland. The area of adjoining grassland measures 125 sqm. To compensate for this loss of open space (as suggested by the pre-app response) the surplus area of MUGA (170 sqm) will be landscaped to meet BNG requirements. The net effect will be to create an additional 45 sqm of green open space.

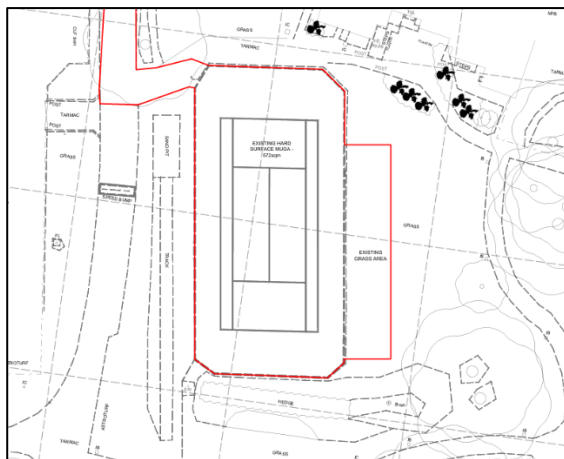


Fig. 2. Existing Site Plan



Fig. 3. Proposed Site Plan

3.3 The padel courts will be constructed to industry standard dimensions of approximately 20m long x 10m wide and will consist of a steel frame, with 12mm toughened glass panels forming the rear walls and parts of the sidewalls. The remainder of the structure will use welded powder-coated wire mesh panels. The maximum height of each padel court is 4m.

3.4 The playing surface consists of a 12mm artificial grass playing surface similar to the adjoining long jump track, hockey pitch and other tennis courts on site. A net, like that used in tennis, divides the courts in two.

3.5 The canopies are custom designed to cover padel courts and comprise steel and aluminium framing with opaque polycarbonate roof panels that are intended to minimise visual prominence and glare. Integrated drainage systems will collect roof water and discharge to the existing drainage network.

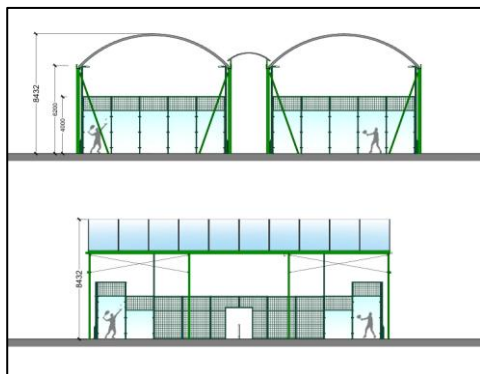


Fig. 4 Proposed Elevations



Fig. 5. Built Example

3.6 During school time the padel courts will be in frequent use by students. Outside of school hours, the proposed operating hours for community use are:

Term-Time

Community Use	Mon - Fri:	17:30 – 21.00
	Sat:	08:00 – 18:00
	Sun:	09:00 – 18:00

School Holidays

Community Use	Mon - Fri:	08:00 – 21:00
	Sat:	08:00 – 18:00
	Sun:	09:00 – 18:00

These hours are consistent with the operation of existing sports facilities at the school.



Innovative Padel Court Solutions

Planning & Design | advice | drawings | applications

3.7 No alterations are proposed to the existing parking arrangements. Existing on-site parking provision associated with the sports centre and wider campus, accessed off Green Lane will continue to serve the development.

4.0 Planning Policy Context

4.1 The application has been assessed against the relevant provisions of:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024;
- The London Plan 2021;
- Hillingdon Local Plan Part 1 (2012);
- Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 (2020).

4.2 Key policies relevant to the proposal include:

- NPPF Chapters 8, 12, 14, 15 and 16;
- London Plan Policies G2, G5, G6, HC1 and S5;
- Hillingdon Policies DMCI 1, DMEI 4, DMEI 7, DMHB 1, DMHB 4, DMHB 11 and DMHB 14.

4.3 The proposal accords with the overarching policy objective of promoting healthy communities, improving access to sports and recreational facilities, and supporting educational infrastructure.

5.0 Principle of Development

5.1 The principle of enhancing sports provision within an established educational campus is strongly supported by national and local planning policy.

5.2 Paragraph 100 of the NPPF requires significant weight to be given to the expansion and enhancement of schools, whilst Paragraph 104 supports the retention and improvement of sports and recreational facilities.

5.3 The proposal does not result in the loss of formal playing field provision. Instead, it repurposes an existing disused MUGA and enhances the quality and



Innovative Padel Court Solutions

Planning & Design | advice | drawings | applications

diversity of sporting opportunities available at the school and within the wider community. The development therefore aligns with:

- London Plan Policy S5 (Sports and Recreation);
- Hillingdon Policy DMCI 1 (Retention of Community Facilities);
- Hillingdon Policy DMCI 2 (New Community Infrastructure).

5.4 The school already operates community-access sports facilities on a pay-and-play basis, including the leisure centre and outdoor sports areas. The proposed padel courts will continue this established approach to community use.

5.5 The courts will primarily serve pupils during the school day, with wider community use available during evenings, weekends and school holiday periods. Community access arrangements will operate alongside the school's safeguarding procedures and controlled access systems.

5.6 The proposal therefore represents a sustainable and policy-compliant enhancement of existing educational and recreational infrastructure.

6.0 Technical Considerations

Design and Heritage

6.1 The application site lies within the Northwood, Frithwood Conservation Area and the design approach has been carefully developed to preserve the character and appearance of the area.

6.2 The proposal reuses an existing hard-surfaced sports facility rather than introducing development into open undeveloped land. The courts are centrally located within the wider sports campus and are viewed in the context of existing sports infrastructure, including the adjoining floodlit hockey facilities and tennis courts.

6.3 The canopy structures have been designed specifically for padel use and utilise muted materials and low-reflective polycarbonate roofing to minimise



Innovative Padel Court Solutions

Planning & Design | advice | drawings | applications

visual impact. Existing mature trees and hedgerows around the site will be retained and protected.

6.4 In response to the pre-application advice, the development has been designed to replace the encroachment into greenfield space by landscaping an area of the existing MUGA that is surplus to requirements. Any redundant areas of hardstanding outside the immediate development footprint will be returned to soft landscaping to provide visual enhancement and heritage benefit.

6.5 The proposal preserves the open and landscaped character of the campus and will not harm the significance of the conservation area. The development therefore accords with:

- NPPF Chapter 16;
- London Plan Policy HC1;
- Hillingdon Policies DMHB 1, DMHB 4 and DMHB 11.

6.6 A separate Heritage Statement accompanies the planning application.

Residential Amenity

6.7 The nearest residential properties are located to the north on Carew Road, with Gwyer House positioned between the courts and most nearby dwellings.

6.8 The proposal has been designed to minimise impacts upon neighbouring amenity through:

- Retention of existing boundary landscaping;
- Use of directional LED lighting with shielding;
- Careful siting within an existing sports area;
- Use of low-glare lighting technology;
- Limiting operational management through controlled booking arrangements.



Innovative Padel Court Solutions

Planning & Design | advice | drawings | applications

6.9 A Lighting Assessment accompanies the application and demonstrates that light spill will be appropriately controlled to avoid unacceptable impacts on nearby residential occupiers, ecological habitats and the conservation area.

6.10 Noise impacts associated with padel activity have also been carefully considered. The courts are located within an established sports campus where recreational activity already occurs. Any noise generated would be consistent with the existing lawful sporting use of the site and would not result in unacceptable residential harm.

6.11 The proposal therefore complies with Policy DMHB 11 of the Hillingdon Local Plan.

Trees, Landscaping and Ecology

6.12 Existing mature trees and hedgerows surrounding the site make an important contribution to the character of the campus and conservation area. All significant vegetation will be retained and protected during construction.

6.13 The application is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan.

6.14 The site itself is largely hard surfaced and of limited ecological value. However, the surrounding boundary vegetation provides potential habitat for birds and bats. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal accompanies the application and confirms that the development can proceed without significant ecological harm subject to appropriate mitigation.

6.15 A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment has been undertaken and accompanies this statement. The assessment demonstrates that the proposed development will achieve a biodiversity net gain of 29.41%. While a portion of the existing grassland will be lost to accommodate the proposed courts, compensatory landscaping within surplus areas of the existing Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) will provide sufficient ecological enhancement to deliver a significant net gain in biodiversity.

6.16 Lighting design has been developed in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust guidance to minimise spill onto adjacent vegetation and wildlife corridors. Biodiversity enhancement measures, including soft landscaping and ecological enhancements, will provide measurable biodiversity gain in accordance with:

- London Plan Policy G6;
- Hillingdon Policy DMEI 7;
- The Environment Act 2021.

Highways and Transport

6.17 The development will utilise the school's existing parking and access arrangements. The school currently benefits from a substantial on-site parking provision serving the leisure centre and sports facilities accessed from the main entrance off Green Lane which includes approximately 89 parking spaces and cycle parking facilities.

6.18 The padel courts will accommodate a maximum of 8no. players at any given time. The existing MUGA which was previously used for netball, could accommodate up to 14 players. The proposed development is therefore modest and is not expected to generate significant additional traffic movements beyond the existing operation of the sports facilities.

6.19 The proposal therefore complies with NPPF Chapter 9 and relevant London Plan transport policies.

Flood Risk and Drainage

6.20 The site lies within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at low risk of flooding.

6.21 The proposal largely reuses existing hard surfacing and does not materially increase impermeable coverage. Integrated canopy drainage systems will collect rainwater and discharge to the existing drainage network.

6.22 The development therefore complies with London Plan Policies SI12 and SI13 and Hillingdon Policies DMEI 9 and DMEI 10.



Innovative Padel Court Solutions
Planning & Design | advice | drawings | applications

Inclusive Access

6.23 The proposed facility will be fully accessible and inclusive in accordance with London Plan Policy D5.

6.24 Padel is recognised as an accessible sport suitable for users of varying ages and abilities. The courts will be accessed via existing surfaced routes within the campus and will provide inclusive recreational opportunities for both pupils and the wider community.

7.0 Planning Balance and Conclusion

7.1 The proposal represents a sustainable and policy-compliant enhancement to the sporting facilities at St Helen's School.

7.2 The development:

- Reuses an existing underutilised sports surface;
- Enhances educational and recreational infrastructure;
- Supports community participation in sport;
- Preserves the character and appearance of the conservation area;
- Retains important landscaping and ecological features;
- Avoids unacceptable impacts on residential amenity;
- Provides health, wellbeing and social benefits consistent with national and local planning objectives.

7.3 The pre-application response from the London Borough of Hillingdon confirmed support for the principle of the development subject to appropriate technical assessment and mitigation.

7.4 Taken as a whole, the proposal accords with the National Planning Policy Framework, the London Plan and the Hillingdon Local Plan. The application is therefore respectfully recommended for approval.



Innovative Padel Court Solutions
Planning & Design | advice | drawings | applications

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

7.5 The proposal is strongly supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024, particularly those sections which encourage participation in sport, healthy lifestyles and the enhancement of community recreation facilities.

7.6 Paragraph 102 of the NPPF states that the planning system should support “healthy, inclusive and safe places” which enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would improve access to “open space and opportunities for sport and physical activity.”

7.7 Paragraph 103 further recognises the importance of access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation in supporting the health and wellbeing of communities.

7.8 Paragraph 100 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to give significant weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decision-making.

7.9 In addition, Paragraph 104 confirms that existing sports and recreational land should be protected unless the development would result in equivalent or better provision. The current proposal does not result in the loss of playing field land and instead enhances the sporting offer at St Helen’s School through the provision of modern facilities within an existing developed sports area.

7.10 The proposed development therefore directly supports the objectives of the NPPF by:

- Encouraging participation in outdoor sport and physical activity;
- Enhancing community access to recreational facilities;
- Supporting health and wellbeing objectives;
- Improving existing educational sports infrastructure;
- Making effective use of previously developed recreational land.

7.11 As such, significant weight should be afforded to the public benefits arising from the proposal.

8.0 Existing Site Photos



1. Proposed Development Site and Gwyer House



2. Proposed Development Site



3. Adjoining long jump track



4. Adjoining Hockey Pitch



5. Adjoining hedgerow and trees



6. Junior School