

Officer Report – Planning Committee

Application: EPF/1427/26

Site: Old Loughtonians Hockey Club, Luxborough Lane, Chigwell, IG7 5AB

Proposal: Variation of Condition 2 of EPF/0687/24 to approve revised plans for the padel tennis facility

Designation: Metropolitan Green Belt

Background

Planning permission was granted under EPF/0687/24 for four covered padel courts, parking and a small reception, refreshment and storage facility. The Parish Council objected because of the effect on the openness of the Green Belt, but EFDC approved the development.

This application seeks retrospective approval for changes made during construction. The application form states that work started in September 2025 and was completed in June 2026.

Changes to the approved scheme

The number of courts remains unchanged and the canopy still measures approximately 55 metres by 25 metres. The revised canopy is about 300mm higher at the sides, but around 900mm lower at its highest point. The position and orientation of the courts have also changed slightly.

The approved 20-foot shipping container has been replaced by a purpose-built clubhouse approximately 14.26 metres long, 2.9 metres deep and 3 metres high. It contains a reception and retail area, lounge and internal seating. It is therefore considerably larger than the facility previously approved.

Green Belt

The principle of four padel courts has already been accepted. The canopy footprint has not increased and its maximum height has reduced. However, the larger clubhouse introduces more enclosed floorspace into the Green Belt than the approved shipping container.

The clubhouse remains within the padel facility, close to the existing hockey clubhouse and the M11. The main issue is whether its increased size, together with the revised enclosure details, causes materially greater harm to Green Belt openness than the approved scheme.

Parking and access

The revised plans retain 68 car spaces, three disabled bays, four motorcycle spaces and four active electric-vehicle charging points. The Transport Statement Addendum considers that this would meet likely demand, including where players remain in the clubhouse after using the courts.

The current Essex parking guidance indicates that 26 cycle spaces should be provided. The application retains the previously approved 20-space cycle shelter. The applicant argues that the standard is based on sports involving more participants than padel, but no detailed assessment of likely cycle demand has been submitted.

Noise and lighting

The number of courts and operating capacity are unchanged. EFDC accepted the original noise assessment, and the existing permission limits opening hours to between 7am and 10pm.

The courts and clubhouse have moved, and the enclosure details have changed. EFDC will need to be satisfied that the approved noise and lighting controls remain suitable for the completed layout.

Plans and documents

The covering letter states that the revised site plan and clubhouse drawing are to replace or supplement the approved plans. However, the proposed wording of Condition 2 in the covering letter still refers to the old site plan and omits the clubhouse drawing. The canopy drawing references are also inconsistent.

The approved-plan condition will therefore need to be corrected so that it clearly identifies the development now being considered