

REPORT SUMMARY

REFERENCE NO – 21/03824/FULL			
APPLICATION PROPOSAL			
Alterations to club house including replacement of the existing infill steel diagonals on the balcony with glass panels, the balcony hand rail and the surface of the balcony; removal of the existing 'cage' around the external staircase; installation of glazed bi-folding doors on the first floor, overlooking the courts; blocking up of three doors on the ground floor; replacement of the existing windows and doors and to increase the size of one of the rear windows			
ADDRESS			
Tunbridge Wells Lawn Tennis Club, Nevill Gate, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 5ES			
RECOMMENDATION To GRANT planning permission subject to Conditions (please refer to section 11.0 of this report for full recommendation)			
SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal is to improve facilities at a long established tennis club; • The proposal would not cause harm to the residential amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties; • The proposal would have no impact on the significance of the Conservation Area; • Other issues raised have been assessed and would not warrant refusal of the application or cannot be controlled satisfactorily by condition. 			
INFORMATION ABOUT FINANCIAL BENEFITS OF PROPOSAL			
The following are considered to be material to the application:			
Contributions (to be secured through Section 106 legal agreement/unilateral undertaking): N/A			
Net increase in numbers of jobs: N/A			
Estimated average annual workplace salary spend in Borough through net increase in numbers of jobs: N/A			
The following are not considered to be material to the application:			
Estimated annual council tax benefit for Borough: N/A			
Estimated annual council tax benefit total: N/A			
Estimated annual business rates benefits for Borough: N/A			
REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE			
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is the landowner			
WARD Pantiles and St Marks	PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL N/A	APPLICANT Ross Barnes (Club Manager) AGENT Sophie George	
DECISION DUE DATE 18/01/22	PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE 31/12/21	OFFICER SITE VISIT DATE 07/12/2021	
RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY (including appeals and relevant history on adjoining sites – there are a number of planning permissions for development relating to the tennis club, but these are not directly relevant to this proposal):			
90/00535/FUL	Replacement tennis pavilion	Granted	06/06/90

MAIN REPORT

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

- 1.01 The Tunbridge Wells Lawn Tennis Club (TWLTC) is situated in a predominantly residential area off Warwick Park and is adjacent to the Tunbridge Wells Cricket Club. There are two entrances to the tennis club – one off Upper Cumberland Walk and one via Nevill Gate, which is itself accessed from Warwick Park.
- 1.02 A number of residential properties border the TWLTC. These consist of dwellings on the south-eastern side of Blatchington Road, the garden of 67a Warwick Park and the garden of Birchmead in Nevill Gate. To the east of the site is the Nevill Cricket Ground.
- 1.03 There are a number of dwellings to the north of the site in Upper Cumberland Walk. These properties are set back from the road and present close board fencing, established hedging and tree lines to their southern boundaries.
- 1.04 The TWLTC benefits from a large number of outdoor courts. A club house stands in the north-east corner of the site that was built following a grant of planning permission in 1990.
- 1.05 Due to the location of the club house, which stands well away from the western, southern and northern boundaries of the site, no residential properties are considered to be in close proximity to the location of the proposed development.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.01 The proposal consists of various external alterations to the TWLTC club house. These include:
- Replacing the existing infill steel diagonals on the balcony with glass panels;
 - Replacing the balcony's steel handrail in timber and aluminium
 - Re-surfacing of the balcony's concrete tiled floor with grey composite decking;
 - Removing the existing steel 'cage' around the external staircase;
 - Refurbishing the existing external staircase with new timber work;
 - Installing large glazed bi-folding doors on the first floor, overlooking the club's courts. This will require alterations to the existing structural openings;
 - Blocking up three external doors on the east elevation at ground floor level to accommodate the new internal layout;
 - Replacing the existing uPVC windows and doors with new aluminium framed units;
 - Enlarging one of the rear windows (in height only).
- 2.02 A number of internal layout changes are also proposed, but this work would not be classed as 'development' as per Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. It accordingly does not require planning permission.

3.0 SUMMARY INFORMATION

- 3.01 The only 'enlargement' proposed is the increase in size of one first floor window on the club house's north elevation:

	Existing Window	Proposed Window	Change (+/-)
Max. Height	0.9m	1.5m	+0.6m
Max. Width	2.0m	2.0m	+/-0

4.0 PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

- Inside Limits to Built Development (LBD);
- Madeira Park and Warwick Park Conservation Area (*statutory duty to preserve or enhance the significance of heritage assets under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*);
- Public Right of Way – Public Footpath (WB46) along Upper Cumberland Walk immediately to the north of the site.

5.0 POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan 2006

Policy EN1: Development Control Criteria
Policy EN5: Conservation Areas

Tunbridge Wells Borough Core Development Strategy 2010

Core Policy 4: Environment
Core Policy 8: Retail, Leisure and Community Facilities Provision
Core Policy 9: Development in Royal Tunbridge Wells

Supplementary Planning Documents

Madeira Park and Warwick Park Conservation Area Appraisal 2019

6.0 LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

- 6.01 Two site notices were displayed, one at the junction of Blatchington Road and Upper Cumberland Walk and one at the Nevill Gate site entrance.
- 6.02 The application was also advertised in the local press.
- 6.03 No representations have been received.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

Mid Kent Environmental Protection

- 7.01 **(14/12/2021)** No objections – if any asbestos is found it should only be removed by a licensed contractor and disposed of at a designated waste disposal site. Two Informatives were suggested.

TWBC Principal Conservation Officer

- 7.02 **(16/12/2021)** It was felt specialist advice was not necessary in this instance.

8.0 APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING COMMENTS (from Design and Access Statement)

- 8.01 The existing club house has served the club well over the last twenty years. Inevitably, upgrades and refurbishment works are required so that the club house can continue to meet the requirements of the members and other users over the next twenty years. The proposed works are contained within the existing footprint of the building; no extensions are proposed. The key objectives of the works are:

- To upgrade the changing rooms;
- To make better use of the downstairs space, including increased storage;
- To improve the connection between the club house and the tennis courts by enabling better views from the first floor;
- To improve the external appearance of the club house.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PLANS

9.01 Application Form;
Location Plan Existing (001 P1);
Site Plan Existing (002 P1);
Floor Plans Existing (P1);
Elevations Existing (P1);
Floor Plans Proposed (005 P1);
Elevations Proposed (006 P1);
Design and Access Statement;
Heritage Statement;
Photographs.

10.0 APPRAISAL

10.01 The main issues are considered to be:

- The principle of the development;
- Design issues;
- Residential amenity;
- Other relevant issues.

Principle of development

- 10.02 The NPPF states at Para. 92(a) that the planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. Para. 92(c) states that planning decisions should enable and support healthy lifestyles; for example through the provision of sports facilities. Para. 98 emphasises that access to a network of opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities.
- 10.03 Core Policy 8 of the TWBC Core Strategy 2010 addresses the provision of leisure and community facilities. Para. 5 promotes the maintenance of recreational and community facilities and para. 6 allows for the improvement and enhancement of the quality of such facilities.
- 10.04 As addressed in the Design and Access Statement, the intention behind this application is to provide development that would enhance the existing club house and enable it to better serve the club's members. No enlargement of the building is proposed and some of the external works are required to facilitate internal layout changes that, in turn, would enable the club house to meet the modern needs of the organisation. On this basis, the principle of the development is considered acceptable.
- ### **Design**
- 10.05 The club house has a symmetrical appearance to its north elevation and this would be diluted by the enlargement of the first floor window. However, this would be to a minimal degree and the overall fenestration pattern would be respected.
- 10.06 The new bi-fold doors would help to modernise the building in such a way that its architectural style and proportions would not be negatively altered. The doors and

glass balustrade to the balcony would also help the club house to better relate to the wider formation of courts and facilities, as would the removal of the staircase's cage.

- 10.07 The replacement of the existing uPVC windows with aluminium units would be considered to be a betterment, as would the refurbishment of the staircase and the replacement balcony flooring and hand rail. Again, this work would all help to modernise the club house.
- 10.08 The TWLTC is located within the Madeira Park and Warwick Park Conservation Area (CA). Notwithstanding this, the club house is a modern building erected before the site was included in the CA and the relevant TWBC Conservation Area Appraisal does not consider it to be a key building, describing it as a 'neutral feature' within the designation.
- 10.09 Whilst there is some cumulative historic interest as part of the original planned recreation ground that started with the Nevill Cricket Ground, the proposed alterations are modest and would not affect the building's relationship with the wider area. Further to this, no trees would be removed as part of the works and no change to landscaping is proposed.
- 10.10 As the proposed development only affects an existing building that does not sit in a prominent location (and then only amounts to relatively minor external alterations), the application is considered to preserve the character of the CA.

Residential amenity

- 10.11 As explained above, the club house is located a substantial distance from any neighbouring residential property and no enlargement of its built form is proposed. Accordingly, the proposed development would not have an overbearing impact on any adjacent occupiers and nor would it cause any overshadowing.
- 10.12 The proposal incorporates the enlargement of one first floor window and the installation of two large bi-fold doors that would form a corner on the west and south elevations. Whilst this represents an increase in glazing, the proposed window is only set to be enlarged vertically and the distance between the window and the dwellings in Upper Cumberland Walk is substantial (circa 45m at its minimum). Furthermore, these dwellings carry substantial boundary treatments. As a result, the fenestration changes are not considered to cause any loss of privacy.
- 10.13 Similarly, the proposed bi-fold doors would look out across the TWLTC courts and the closest properties in relation to these openings are 85m away to the west and some 150m to the south. Given these substantial distances and the level of existing fenestration on these elevations, the proposal is not considered to cause any overlooking.
- 10.14 To conclude, the application is considered to have no negative impact on residential amenity.

Other matters

- 10.15 Upper Cumberland Walk is a Public Right of Way. However, by virtue of its location and the nature of the proposed development, the application is not considered to have any effect upon it.

Conclusion

- 10.16 This application seeks planning permission for external alterations to an established tennis organisation's club house that would not harm visual amenity, residential

amenity, nor the significance of the CA. It is therefore considered to comply with the relevant local and national policies.

11.0 RECOMMENDATION – Grant, subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this decision.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Floor Plans Proposed (005 P1);
Elevations Proposed (006 P1).

Reason: To clarify which plans have been approved.

3. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the details of external materials specified in the application which shall not be varied without details being first submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

INFORMATIVES

1. Adequate and suitable measures should be carried out for the minimisation of asbestos fibres during demolition, so as to prevent airborne fibres from affecting workers carrying out the work and nearby properties. Only contractors licensed by the Health and Safety Executive should be employed. Any redundant materials removed from the site should be transported by a registered waste carrier and disposed of at an appropriate legal tipping site.
2. As the development involves demolition and/or construction, broad compliance with the Mid Kent Environmental Code of Development Practice is expected.

Case Officer: Michael Taylor

NB For full details of all papers submitted with this application please refer to the relevant Public Access pages on the council's website.

The conditions set out in the report may be subject to such reasonable change as is necessary to ensure accuracy and enforceability.