

The Grove Lawn Tennis Club, Cascade Avenue, N10 3PS

Citydesigner Response to the Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by Revive & Tailor on behalf of London Borough of Haringey [Ref: HGY/2023/0733] of 18 September 2023

1. This Advice Note by Citydesigner responds to the Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by Revive & Tailor on behalf of London Borough of Haringey [Ref: HGY/2023/0733] dated 18 September 2023 for The Grove Lawn Tennis Club, Cascade Avenue, N10 3PS, hereafter referred to as (“the site”).
2. In reviewing the Council’s Heritage Impact Assessment, this note provides a counter argument and rectification in assessing heritage related impacts of the proposed development by Adam Architecture for the site.
3. There is no future for tennis courts on the subject site. The limited size, the need for surface renovation and its cost, is beyond the limited membership that would arise if a club was proffered. In the current economic climate, tennis club court numbers are required to be much bigger, with a full membership, in order to be economical. This would in any case need to be sustained by members outside the estate and there is insufficient car parking to attract them in. There are other better appointed tennis clubs nearby.
4. A new use needs to be found for the site and housing comes to mind as it is a great need both nationally and locally and it is also what forms the character and appearance of the estate conservation area as a whole. There was a tennis club until around 2007, but the then operator abandoned the management of the courts as a non-viable facility by 2008. Neglect has not been deliberate as since then, the courts remained locked and acquired by the current owner in an existing neglected and derelict state. As a privately owned non-public site, the current owner has carried out repairs to fences after occasional trespass damage, without any further specific maintenance obligation.
5. The overall site as it exists, is not considered to be a non designated heritage asset, it is not on a local list, nor is it a contributor to character and appearance since there is nothing on the site to make a contribution. A change of use therefore must be acceptable.

6. It is true that the tennis courts were always an aspiration and popular at the time of the estate's construction, however the courts occupy a gap in the residential element rather than being a designed open space with a defined enclosure which might otherwise have been created by intentional planting or built form. This is in contrast to Hampstead, Letchworth and Welwyn (Heritage Impact Assessment paragraph 25, p.5). In the case of Hampstead's Central Square tennis courts, for example, they form part of a formally laid out green space between buildings affording views of the surrounding architecture, including the Grade I listed Free Church and St. Jude's Church. Such a space in that instance does contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
7. It is however not possible to say what of the former Grove Lawn tennis courts contributes to the overriding character and appearance of the Rookfield Estate, which is of variously expressed Arts and Crafts residential groupings. "Inspired by garden city model", "part and parcel of same vision" and "harmful to special interest" (Heritage Impact Assessment pp.2 and 5) are not criteria by which the proposal should be judged. Rather, does the scheme satisfy the requirement set out in the NPPF to "preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area". If there were to be a loss it would be to an historic fact rather than an artefact or a designed space. Since the intention is to extend and add to the existing character and appearance, any such perceived harm as a result of the loss of tennis courts must be at the bottom end of "less than substantial" within the terms of the NPPF. This harm is then cancelled out by the enhancement to character and appearance.
8. This is particularly so as a result of the scholarly architectural design by an expert in the Arts and Crafts, Nigel Anderson, Director of Adam Architecture, a practice which is highly rated for its authentic use of historical architectural styles. Haringey's heritage advisors accept this in stating that the architect "has undertaken a careful analysis of the architectural details and form within the area" and to a large extent followed "the architectural treatment of the wider area", with the design "traditional" and "in keeping with the design ethos of the Rookfield Estate" (paragraph 23, p.4). Adding that "Indeed the architecture does pay a homage to the Free English Domestic style" (paragraph 24, p.5).
9. This is then negated by a criticism of the scale adopted, when compared to the scale of the context. It is plainly obvious by the contextual street elevations that a compatible scale is adopted for the new elements. It is accepted that the new houses are better appointed than those which exist but in the 21st century, some 120 years in from the conception of the estate, this is a natural optimising of the site which is supported by policy. Policy also supports the enhancement of conservation areas, i.e. change, when they respond to context. This proposal certainly fulfils this policy requirement.

10. The remaining elements of concern raised by the heritage advisors is one of scale, the addition of dormers on the street-side roofs and the fact that garden 'sections' show a four storey elevation. The houses are deeper in plan giving rise to a horizontal roof element in the centre of the plan. This helps maintain the visible scale of the roof plane thus being compatible with neighbouring roof planes.
11. The dormer is not a new element in the conservation area. It makes optimum use of the given volume by allowing habitable space through natural light and ventilation. The dormers are of a compatible scale and are traditionally detailed. That most dormers are on the garden side of the existing houses does not preclude them from being part of the character and appearance and therefore reference to them in the proposal is appropriate.
12. As a counterpoint, the appearance of a four storey elevation on the garden side drawings does not mean it will be visible other than at close quarters and within the ownership of the occupant. Since the fourth, lowest floor is below ground level it will not be visible from ground level, even by immediate neighbours, and even hardly visible from upper private rooms when the garden planting matures. A two storey brick wall will be visible beneath a traditionally pitched roof, much like the rears of existing houses.
13. In conclusion: a new use is required; residential, the most pressing need, is appropriate; a scholarly interpretation of the prevailing architectural style is appropriate; enhancing character and appearance by addition is appropriate and; these constitute public benefits which far outweigh any perceived harm caused by the loss of an historical use.

Citydesigner

9 October 2023