

LB HARINGEY PLANNING APPLICATION - HGY/2024/0871

LB BARNET ref 24/1407/NAC

FORTIS GREEN TENNIS CLUB (FGTC), Southern Road N2

Comments from Wendy Hill

My house in Shakespeare Gardens shares a boundary at the north eastern corner of the tennis club, and I have been a playing member there for over 20 years.

I have concerns about the proposed development for a number of reasons set out below.

LOSS OF FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE FOR FGTC

1. The club has occupied the site for over a hundred years and is on land which is subject to an 1853 Covenant stating its use for “ tennis courts and/or bowling greens with the necessary pavilions”. It is a community facility.

2. While any club would theoretically welcome investment it should not come at the cost of reducing the facilities with the loss of a court and the green open space, central to the club’s activities. The proposal is based on the false argument put forward by the developer that FGTC is a failing club and has been run into the ground. The development has been presented as a way of saving the club (which is not failing) when the aim is clearly for the Church and developer to capitalise on the land by developing expensive housing.

3. The proposed new court comes at the loss of 2 larger existing courts. The size of the site will not allow for any more space around the new and remaining 2 courts to become more size compliant than at present, contrary to the statement in the application. In addition there would be a loss of the central space of grass, trees and shrubbery which create the calm and peaceful atmosphere of the club to the benefit and well being of members, as well as affecting the environment for birds and other wildlife. At present this area is a private safe space for children to play and to be seen within the club, and for members to watch games. As outdoor space it is an important area for socialising, and having social events, including BBQs, which would no longer be possible. The proposed clubhouse will not compensate for this loss. Overall the changes and loss of amenity would not be replaced by an equivalent facility.

MISINFORMATION ABOUT THE CLUB

4. While the developer and Church have had on-going discussions with FGTC over a number of years there is no agreement in place to ensure that the club survives, nor a programme of works for the courts to be developed within these proposals. Indeed, the developer did not even notify the club at the time of submitting the planning application. With no guarantees for the future,

and no similar club with clay courts as near, playing tennis would be difficult for me and many other members, including children currently being coached.

5. Any uncertainty for the club has been created by the owners not renewing the long term lease in 2016, even raising the possibility of eviction from the site. Despite this, the club itself has continued to fund and maintain the facilities to a good standard through the efforts of its members.

6. The descriptive and photographic information about the state of the club within this application are misleading and out of date based on visits several years ago. Red shale courts can be affected by weather and regular maintenance is required. Spreading the clay dressing and rolling the courts, as well as other maintenance of the grounds, is done by working parties of members as well as a paid groundsman. This work enables the club to keep open for most of the year. This is very much a community club and is in good working condition.

7. There is a strong youth tennis programme run by the club coach with links to local schools, reflecting the strength and breadth of membership and its community base.

8. The developer's consultation leaflet sent to local residents appeared to be on behalf of FGTC when in fact there was no involvement from the club in this exercise. This misrepresentation and the out of date images, raise questions about any responses received as well as the integrity of the developer in using the club in this way.

PRE PLANNING AND SITE ISSUES

9. The Pre-planning application raised a number of issues from the planning department which have not been fully resolved in this application. In particular the over development and density of the housing and its relationship with neighbouring properties; the overbearing size and proximity of the flats to the courts; the amount of hard landscape and lack of green space; and the open access to the site, raising concerns about security and safeguarding for children in particular.

10. In addition the submitted plans and drawings vary between documents. This is of concern, given the overall slope of the site, as the inconsistencies in the levels shown raise questions about how the height of buildings relate to the site as a whole and the neighbouring houses in Shakespeare Gardens and Cherry Tree Road, as well as the existing street level where the site adjoins Cherry Tree Road, 2 metres above the courts.

11. The application does not address drainage issues. Together, the significant slope of the site, the loss of natural green landscape, the creation of buildings and hard landscape, and the amount of infill required to level the site, create concern about water flow from the site which is already affected by standing water. The proposal will have an impact on neighbouring gardens and Cherry Tree Woods, which already suffers from poor drainage and flooding, and the possible effect on wildlife and biodiversity to the south of the site where there are badger setts.

ACCESS FROM BARNET

12. Although the site is in LB Haringey, proposed access would be through LB Barnet roads. Clearly this large development in a residential area will affect residents in both Shakespeare Gardens and Cherry Tree Road during construction. When completed, it will permanently change what is now a cul de sac into a narrow through road with increased traffic. The amount of space and limits of the site create problems of access for vehicles to the site, and parking in general. These changes would reduce safety for all and the opportunity for children to play in what is now a closed road. Any change to road access is for Barnet rather than Haringey and is yet to be resolved. In addition I understand that the strip of land at the boundary of the club and Cherry Tree Road is in fact held by a Trust which raises questions about the viability of the development and is not addressed in the application.

LOSS OF AMENITY

13. As an immediate neighbour to the site I will suffer a loss of amenity from this development. It would seriously change the outlook from my rear garden and windows onto mature trees and shrubbery, to be replaced by an imposing clubhouse block and flats, and also affect other neighbours in the same way. In addition, the occupants of the proposed terrace would be overlooked by, and look onto the flats, with the loss of the existing green space. The flat occupants and tennis courts will suffer from being so close.

14. As a tennis club member I and other members, including a large number of children, would have a smaller facility with the loss of a tennis court and a safe open green space, as well as the ability to play tennis for a long period while the site is developed, with no guarantees for the future of the club. No other club would offer me the same benefits of close walking distance and value for money.

CONSULTATION

15. Finally, I am concerned that for such a large scale development which affects 15 adjoining neighbours (including me), a large number of other close neighbours, as well as involving 2 boroughs and a third party Trust, that the consultation process has been flawed. I have still not received formal written notification of the application in line with many other neighbours. Word of mouth is not an appropriate way to disseminate such important information. As a result of the feedback from a number of people to Haringey and Barnet, the closing dates for the consultation and decision have been revised several times creating uncertainty about the process. Given the growing interest and that the site is not a target area for development in Haringey, and the proposal would reduce sporting activity, it is helpful that the application will now be examined by the planning committee.

Given my comments and observations above, I would ask the committee not to approve this planning application.