

MUSWELL HILL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH CHARITY

Queens Avenue, London N10 3NU
including the former Alexandra Park URC

Please reply to:

Adrian Stannard
Treasurer
United Reformed Church
Queens Avenue
London N10 3NU

Josh Parker, Planner
Development Management Support
Planning Service
Level 6, River Park House,
225 High Road, Wood Green
London N22 8HQ

18th May 2024

MUSWELL HILL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH CHARITY (MHURC)
RESPONSE TO PLANNING APPLICATION HGY/2024/0871
Tennis Club, Southern Road, London N2 9LH

Dear Mr. Parker,

We have been informed you are the Planning Officer dealing with this planning application and wanted to send this to support the application and to reiterate our commitment to keeping the Tennis facility and protecting its longevity.

The Tennis Club has been let to the Fortis Green Tennis Club, the current occupiers, for a considerable period of time at a nominal rent of £1,000 per annum and it is our intention for them to remain in situ with the improved facilities and for the rent to remain the same. If the current occupiers don't want to stay, we are prepared to take over its running, as we are committed to this community facility remaining.

The lease to the Fortis Green Tennis Club has now expired and they are currently holding over, but if planning is achieved, we would look to grant them a new 125 year lease, which will obviously secure their position going forward.

The reason why we decided to work with a developer to redevelop the site is two-fold. The first, was the decline in the condition of the tennis playing surfaces and the need to replace these courts with a more up to date and longer lasting surface together with enhancing the facilities within the Tennis Club such as community space, showers, changing rooms etc at **no cost to the Club**. Secondly, to raise funds from the sale of the development to support our community works at Muswell Hill URC.

We have already submitted our supporting comments on the Planning Portal which includes the history of the site from the Church's perspective but felt the Council should be made aware of the community groups we are already supporting in Muswell Hill which are listed below:

- Alcoholics Anonymous - 2 groups
- University of the Third Age - Art Class
- Art in the Village - monthly Art classes
- Creative Writes - quarterly creative writing group
- London Academy of Gymnastics and Dance - class on behalf of Norfolk House School proposing 2 further toddler sessions from October 2023.
- Fitness Class
- Brownies
- Scouts, Cubs, Beavers (October to Easter).
- Haringey Councillor surgeries
- Hungarian toddler music group
- Coldfall Community Choir
- East Finchley Open Artists - quarterly meetings and Art fair in November
- Muswell Hill Sustainability Group - occasional meetings
- Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association - occasional meetings and anniversary celebration
- Finchley Music Children's Group - rehearsals
- North London Voices - rehearsals and performances
- North London Festival Chorus - rehearsals, workshop & quiz night
- Crouch End Festival – Chorus, rehearsals & auditions
- Garsington Opera - rehearsal and auditions
- English Concert Orchestra - new request pending.

The WAVE Cafe serves lunch and holds activities on Thursdays at a very reasonable cost to anyone who wishes to take part. WAVE are a social enterprise set up to bring people with and without learning disabilities together and to help build a truly inclusive community. We hope to work with WAVE to increase their use of the building and their offer to the Community.

With the proceeds of the sale of the land we will be able to carry out the Phase 2 development of our building ensuring it is sustainable for the future.

On a point of fact you will have seen many of the objectors stating there is a strip of land at the end of Cherry Tree Road owned by someone who will not grant access across the Barnet/Haringey boundary. This rumour has been around for years so with the help of our Solicitors research has been carried out, but no strip of land has been identified. What was identified is the Highway (Cherry Tree Road) goes right up against our boundary with the street.

As I am sure you will be aware, trying to raise funds for supporting these community groups is not easy in this current financial climate and therefore the funds provided through the sale to the developer will ensure these services can be continued to be supported and offered.

Please note that we are happy for you to publish this letter on your Haringey Planning Portal in relation to this application and should you require any further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Treasurer

P.S. Below are the comments we submitted to the Planning Portal.

- In 1926 the Congregational Church started renting the tennis courts for use by members of the Muswell Hill Congregational Church. In 1951 the Congregational Church purchased the site and gave a lease to the Church Tennis Club to use the site. In 1972 the United Reformed Church (URC) was created by combining the Congregational and Presbyterian churches. The URC (Thames North Trust) then took over the freehold of all their properties including the tennis court site.
- As church membership of the tennis club dwindled it was decided in 2009 to create the Fortis Green Tennis Club and set up a Tenancy Agreement, initially for 7 years, to ensure the courts could continue to provide tennis facilities for the local community. It was always hoped funding could be found for adding sewerage and electricity, but that was never achieved.
- In 2015 our Tetherdown Hall was sold allowing us to submit a Planning Application in 2016 to redevelop the church building. This work proceeded, but costs overran, and work was partially finished in 2019 when the Thames North Trust (TNT) loaned us funds to complete the first phase. The agreement at the time was for us to sell the Tennis Courts to enable the loan to be paid off.
- We have been working with Fortis Green LLP since 2021 to evolve a scheme which would raise the funds to pay off our debt while continuing to keep a tennis facility for the community.
- The scheme, as presented, has evolved with many discussions with the Fortis Green Tennis Club to enable a new clubhouse and 3 courts to be built to modern standards with full sewerage and electricity supplies at no cost to the Club nor to the TNT and MHURC. The Church hopes this will enable the enhanced tennis facilities to attract new club members and enable it to thrive for many more years. In addition, it should help MHURC to complete the work on the church and continue developing a community hub for Muswell Hill.
- MHURC supports Rocha UK Eco Church, has already achieved a Bronze Eco award and is now working towards the Silver award. Eco Church is about caring for God's earth and is an essential part of the church's mission in the

world. Churches can and should be agents of restoration in their local communities. This includes modelling ways of living sustainably. Among other things, proceeds of the sale of the land will enable us to replace the current and now aging heating system with a cleaner modern model.

- The Planning Application makes it clear that it complies with all the appropriate policies and will help Haringey meet its housing target whilst keeping a community facility. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to provide additional housing and to support facilities for the community. It is designed to minimise the impact on the residents of the surrounding streets, whilst keeping a tennis facility, which has been on the site for at least 100 years.
- As to the “ransom strip” at the end of Cherry Tree Road, mentioned by objectors, this is just a rumour that has been around for decades. No extensive research, including by our solicitors, has been able to prove it exists. In fact the boundary of the Highway at Cherry Tree Road runs up to the Tennis Club site boundary fence.

We urge you to approve this scheme and to enable us to release the value of this site to enhance the community facilities of both the tennis courts and the Muswell Hill community at large.