

HGY/2023/0733

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

The following comments are submitted on behalf of the Hornsey Historical Society in response to the above planning application for development on the site of the existing tennis courts lying between Cascade Avenue and the Chine on the Rookfield Estate.

The Rookfield Estate is of special interest partly due to its topography and partly because it was developed by a single family of builders, the Collins family, over a relatively long period of time, between 1901 and 1934. The history and development of the estate is described in detail in David Frith's book *'The Rookfield Estate, Muswell Hill's Garden Suburb'*.

The Rookfield Estate preserves to a remarkable degree the vision of a suburb in the city with the application of town planning principles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (within the local planning constraints that applied) and has matured into a residential environment of considerable charm and architectural interest.

The earliest houses belong to the Edwardian era and are typical of development by the Collins family and others in Crouch End and Muswell Hill. The houses in Etheldene Avenue follow the Norman Shaw tradition with casement windows and tile-hanging. Other streets show the influence of Arts and Crafts architects such as Baillie Scott and of Hampstead Garden Suburb. Later houses incorporate neo-Georgian detailing with references also to English vernacular architecture. The private road layout is also a distinctive feature of the estate, and a major contributor to its character and appearance, helping to preserve the grassed verges and well-planted public areas.

The estate has three principal open spaces. The two public open spaces, The Court (on Cascade Avenue) and Rookfield Close, each have a different character and each contribute positively to the setting of the surrounding houses. The Court is an attractive piece of townscape with the houses set back behind a grassed area informally planted with trees and shrubs with access to the houses by means of informal paths of an 'arcadian' quality. Rookfield Close is an architecturally accomplished composition on a par with anything similar in Hampstead Garden Suburb, with houses and flats facing onto the rectangular green, the whole assembly enhanced by the curved brick walls forming the entrance from Cranmore Way.

The third open space on the estate is comprised of the tennis courts which formed an integral part of the estate's development and for many years were an important element in the social fabric of the local community. The tennis courts were formally laid out with a clubhouse positioned at the mid-point of the north boundary. The clubhouse is built in a matching brickwork to the surrounding houses, complete with a hipped, tiled roof. It is clear that this was a purposefully designed arrangement and it is notable that the central house of the southernmost group on Cascade Avenue has the distinction of a large balcony on the front elevation overlooking the tennis courts on the other side of the road, indicating the close assimilation of the tennis club's open space within the surrounding estate's townscape.

The planning application proposes new development infilling the tennis court site with two terraces each of four houses facing Cascade Avenue and The Chine respectively. In the Society's view the proposed scale, massing and density of the proposed terraces greatly exceeds that of the existing houses on Cascade Avenue and the Chine. For this reason, in our view, the proposed houses would detract from the character of the estate and of the conservation area.

The Society is most concerned, however, with the loss of the tennis courts as an important open space within the estate, both for its historic and townscape importance as well as for its community heritage. The tennis courts should not be dismissed simply as an unused and derelict site presenting a development opportunity but should be considered as an historic open space that forms an integral and important element of the Rookfield Estate and is therefore a significantly positive contributor to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposed development of the tennis courts would result in the loss of this historic open space and the permanent loss of a community asset.

For the above reasons the Hornsey Historical Society objects to this planning application.

Ray Rogers

Hornsey Historical Society