



St George's Hill Lawn Tennis Club, Warreners Lane, St George's Hill, Weybridge KT13 0LL

The erection of three semi-enclosed padel tennis courts and a two storey groundkeepers shed, associated landscape and access works, following the demolition of existing ancillary buildings

Planning Statement (including Statement of Community Involvement)

March 2023

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**St George's Hill Lawn Tennis Club,
Warreners Lane, St George`s Hill,
Weybridge KT13 0LL**

Planning Statement

Reference: AZ2210
Status: Submission
Date: 17.03.23

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Site description	6
3. St George's Hill Lawn Tennis Club & Client requirements	8
4. Relevant planning history of the application site	11
5. Description of the proposed development	13
6. Relevant planning policies.....	14
7. Key planning issues.....	16
8. Principle of development	17
9. Design	19
10. Impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties	21
11. Transport, parking and Waste	22
12. flooding & Drainage	24
13. Impact on trees.....	25
14. Ecology and Biodiversity	26
15. Archaeology.....	27
16. Statement of Community Involvement.....	28
17. Conclusion.....	29

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. AZ Urban Studio has prepared this Planning Statement ('Statement') on behalf of St George's Hill Lawn Tennis Club Ltd ('the applicant') to support a planning application for the proposed erection of three semi-enclosed padel tennis courts and consolidation of groundkeepers' facilities in at two storey shed on the club's land.
- 1.2. The proposed development is located on the eastern side of the club. This area currently contains two grass tennis courts and several ancillary outbuildings used in relation to maintenance of the club's tennis courts'
- 1.3. The application is for full planning permission and comprises the proposed erection of three semi-enclosed padel tennis courts and two storey groundkeepers shed, associated landscape and access works, following the demolition of existing ancillary buildings. Critically, this development can take place without impacting adjoining occupiers.
- 1.4. The proposed development includes:
 - The demolition of several existing storage and workshop buildings
 - The erection of a semi enclosed structure containing three padel tennis courts
 - The erection of a two storey ground keepers shed
 - Associated landscape works, minor changes to road access, and the creation of additional paths to increase accessibility.
- 1.5. The purpose of this Statement is to assess the proposed development in the context of planning policy, other relevant and best practice guidance, and any other material considerations. The Statement explains how the proposed development is in accordance with and will deliver the objectives of such policies and therefore represents an appropriate and acceptable development for the area.
- 1.6. This Statement should be read in conjunction with other documents submitted as part of this application, including:
 - Application form
 - Architectural drawings (existing and proposed)
 - Design and Access Statement (including visualisations)
 - Planning Statement (this document)

- Statement of Community Involvement (including in this Statement)
- Drainage Strategy & Flood Risk Assessment
- Assessment of Noise Impact
- Archaeological Assessment
- Ecology Assessment (Stage 1)
- Arboricultural Assessment
- Transport Assessment
- CIL Questionnaire

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

The Site

- 2.1. St George's Hill Lawn Tennis Club is located centrally within the private Estate of St George's Hill. The estate consists primarily of large, detached houses in a period but mixed style. The club is situated between Warreners Lane and East Road.
- 2.2. The proposed development site is located on the eastern side of the club's property (please see the accompanying location plan).

The surrounding area – character

- 2.3. The Site is located within the character area WEY16: St. George's Hill, as identified within the relevant area companion guide to the Council's Design and Character SPD 2012.
- 2.4. Designated a special low-density residential area, St George's Hill is an exclusive private estate predominately containing large gated detached houses, mainly two storeys, some with rooms in the roof space.
- 2.5. Houses are set in generous wooded plots (which historically were no less than one acre) with large front and rear gardens. They are primarily set back from the road, concealed by vegetation. The estate has a spacious, landscape-dominated layout and contains many mature hedges, trees and gardens.
- 2.6. Access is limited exclusively for residents and visitors to the private tennis and golf club. Some of the older houses within this area are statutorily listed, and others are of historic and architectural interest. Many of the original homes Walter George Tarrant designed and built have been replaced by much larger dwellings, although his original design concept for the estate has been retained. There is a mix of architectural styles with only a small number of contemporary houses.
- 2.7. The area experiences change through replacement dwellings and householder alterations and extensions.

Designations

- 2.8. The Site is subject to the following designations/constraints:
- Medium Risk Surface Water Flooding
 - Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area – 400m-5km Buffer Zone
 - Special low density residential area
 - Strategic View 5 – The Valley of the River Mole from the Ledges at Esher
 - Mature trees surrounding the Site and 3 x TPO trees' in the rear garden of Beaumont Lodge
 - An area to the south of Warren Pond is designated by Natural England as a deciduous woodland that is a Priority Habitat.

3. ST GEORGE'S HILL LAWN TENNIS CLUB & CLIENT REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1. St George's Hill Lawn Tennis Club is located centrally within the private Estate of St George's Hill. The Club's CEO, Miles Hill, details below the club's facilities and the rationale for the proposed development:

"St George's Hill Lawn Tennis Club is a private Members' Club located within one of the most prestigious private residential estates in Europe. It is considered one of the finest tennis clubs in the UK.

The club was originally built as a lawn tennis and croquet club in 1913. The reason for today's continuing success has been the club's ability to both evolve and adapt to ever-changing industry trends and new member needs, whilst retaining tradition and heritage, with tennis remaining at its core.

The club's major change in adaptation came in 1998 when the club's membership was in decline and this historical club was in danger of going under. The trend in fitness clubs had begun and with increasing club competition, the Members made the decision to move away from being 'just a tennis club' to becoming more of a 'country club'. Planning permission was granted for a leisure development to include a gymnasium, swimming pool, exercise studio and new changing rooms.

The club's fortunes were then completely turned around. The unique, and tranquil location combined with superb tennis facilities and the then state-of-the-art leisure and fitness facilities, ensured a prosperous future for the club, as can be seen, today.

So why the need for the proposed developments?

The club wishes to introduce padel tennis to meet member demand and to keep up with its competitors and so retaining membership, the 'lifeblood' of the club.

In the last five years' padel tennis has 'exploded' in the UK and as such the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) are now the governing body for the sport, recognising the increasing demand for this new form of tennis.

In 2021, the club trialed a temporary padel court, to understand member demand. Such was the success of the trial, resulting member surveys voted in favour of a padel development and the Club's Board of Directors have been heavily lobbied to develop permanent facilities.

Following the cessation of the trial and now in the absence of padel tennis court facilities at the club, many of Club members are now playing the racquet sport at either Esher or Oxshott tennis Clubs', both having recently installed courts. With many tennis Clubs across the UK introducing the sport, peer tennis Clubs, Hurlingham, Roehampton, Edgebaston and Queen's most notably, are either with active courts or about to go to planning for installing padel tennis courts. It is evident the popularity of the sport is only going to increase.

To avoid the club becoming staid or indeed going backwards in its popularity, it is crucial we keep up with our competitors and meet member demand.

By continuing to adapt and evolve we will ensure our ongoing success within the borough of Elmbridge and remain one of the most prestigious and up-to-date tennis Clubs in Surrey and across the UK.

The club caters for some 3,900 members, the vast majority coming from the Elmbridge borough. As well as many long-standing senior adult members, today's major demand in the borough is coming from families, many of whom are re-locating out of London and seeking a greatly improved work life balance, looking to spend more time with family. The new padel tennis facilities, as proposed, are designed to meet the wants of 'today's' membership.

St George's Hill Lawn Tennis Club doesn't 'just' provide or wish to provide ever better racquets and facilities. It also uniquely meets a growing demand for member social interaction. It offers an extensive range of food and beverage facilities, in addition to a full social events calendar.

For over 100 years the club has been a pivotal part of the Estate and many people's lives, with history and connections routed in many generations of

local families. The club wishes to remain a unique asset to the Estate and borough it can only do this if it continually betters and improves its facilities to ensure it remains attractive to both new and existing members for many years to come.

Miles Hill, CEO, 27th February 2023 .

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY OF THE APPLICATION SITE

4.1. The broader Tennis Club site has quite an extensive planning history which is summarised below:

Reference	Description	Decision
2021/4342	Re-configuration of tennis courts to provide an additional court, making 4 in all, with associated new fencing.	Granted
2021/0792	20m high telecoms mast with associated antennas and equipment.	Refused
2020/3251	Non-Material Amendment to planning permission 2020/2301 to replace perspex panels with glass panels.	Granted
2020/2301	Conversion of single outdoor tennis court to a single Padel court with perspex and mesh panel surrounds up to 4m high.	Granted
2020/1100	Single-storey side extension and new sloping roof.	Granted
2020/0163	Detached single-storey pavilion building (30sqm).	Granted
2018/1378	Two-storey front extension, two-storey side/rear extension (890 sqm), new decking and alterations to parking following demolition of existing single-storey rear restaurant facility (308 sqm).	Permitted
2017/2099	Confirmation of Compliance with Condition: 5 (Archaeological Work) of planning permission 2015/2869	Compliance confirmed
2017/1437	Non-Material Amendments to planning permission 2015/2869 to reduce the number of floodlighting poles from 12 to 8 and increase the height of poles by 1 metre	Refused
2016/3084	Single storey rear extension	Permitted
2016/3062	Confirmation of Compliance with Condition: 5 (Archaeology Project Design) of planning permission 2015/2869	Compliance confirmed
2015/2869	3 new tennis courts (hard surfacing) with associated fencing and floodlighting; new practice wall and gazebo	Permitted
2014/3151	Single storey front infill extension to create reception area (11.2 sqm) and alterations to Clubhouse	Permitted
1987/0453	Single storey extension and alterations – to The Cottage	Permitted

Pre-application engagement

4.2. The application has benefited from formal pre-application engagement with the Local Planning Authority (ref: 2022/1852).

4.3. The Council concluded that the proposed development comprising the construction of semi enclosed padel tennis courts was acceptable in principle. Subject to some minor additional information and requirements. The proposed application has been adapted and expanded to address these issues. Including:

- Submission of a Transport Statement
- Submission of a Flood Risk Assessment
- Submission of a comprehensive Arboricultural Assessment

5. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5.1. The description of the proposed development is as follows:

The erection of three semi-enclosed padel tennis courts, and a two storey ground keepers shed, associated landscape and access works, following the demolition of existing ancillary buildings

5.2. A detailed schedule of areas is included in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

- 6.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Statutory Development Plan for the Site comprises Elmbridge Core Strategy (2011) and Elmbridge Local Plan - Development Management Plan (2015).
- 6.2. The Council is currently preparing the new Local Plan and published the Draft Local Plan in March 2022. Therefore, this will be a material consideration in determining any planning application.
- 6.3. Relevant national guidance is included in the following:
- The National Planning Policy Framework (2021)
 - The National Planning Practice Guidance
- 6.4. In addition to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance, the following local policies and guidance are considered to be relevant to this application:

Core Strategy (2011)

- CS4 – Weybridge
- CS13 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- CS14 – Green Infrastructure
- CS15 – Biodiversity
- CS16 – Social and Community Infrastructure
- CS17 – Local Character, Density and Design
- CS26 – Flooding
- CS27 – Sustainable Buildings

Development Management Plan (2015)

- DM1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- DM2 – Design and amenity
- DM5 – Pollution
- DM6 – Landscape and trees
- DM7 – Access and parking
- DM8 – Refuse, recycling and external plant
- DM21 – Nature conservation and biodiversity

SPDs

- Design & Character SPD 2012
- Development Contribution SPD
- Flood Risk SPD 2016
- Parking SPD

7. KEY PLANNING ISSUES

7.1. The relevant planning policies are outlined below by policy level and theme, followed by a short evaluation of the outline proposal against these policies. For this Statement, we have focused on key planning policy issues, which are:

- Principle of development
- Design
- Impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties
- Transport, parking and waste
- Flooding and drainage
- Impact of trees
- Ecology and biodiversity
- Archaeology

8. PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

8.1. Policy DM9 of the Development Management Plan 2015 sets out that new development for social and community facilities will be encouraged provided that:

1. *It meets identified local need;*
2. *The Site is in a sustainable location that is safe and accessible to the local community;*
3. *It will accord with the character and amenity of the area, particularly in residential areas;*
4. *It achieves a high quality design that allows for flexible use and provides inclusive access for all; and*
5. *The level of parking provision and the effects on traffic movement and highway safety are acceptable.*

8.2. The scheme meets each of the above criteria as detailed below:

1. The scheme meets identified local need for the detailed reasons set out in Section 3 of this Statement, where the CEO of the St. George's Hill Lawn Tennis Club, Miles Hill, states the following, amongst other pertinent points:

"The Club caters for some 3,900 members, the vast majority coming from the Elmbridge borough. As well as many long-standing senior adult members, today's major demand in the borough is coming from families, many of whom are re-locating out of London and seeking a greatly improved work life balance, looking to spend more time with family. The new Padel tennis facilities, as proposed, are designed to meet the wants of 'today's' membership."

This clearly represents an "*identified local need*" for the purposes of Policy DM9.

2. The Site is in a sustainable location that is safe and accessible to the local community. This is demonstrated by the fact that the tennis club is an established sports/fitness facility that has been in this location for 110 years. The Site thereby clearly meets this requirement of Policy DM9.
3. The proposals will accord with the character and amenity of the area. This is supported by the Council's pre-application advice letter, which states that: It is

noted that the proposed padel tennis courts and new groundkeeper's shed are of utilitarian design. However, these are designed for their respective purposes and would not look out of character within the established tennis/fitness club

4. The proposals will be of high quality design as noted in the Council's letter and for the detailed reasons below.
- 8.3. The design will comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, Code of Practice BS 8300 and the requirements of Approved Document Part M of the Building Regulations.
- 8.4. A key driver of the decision to introduce padel tennis is to provide facilities for racket sports to a wider range of users including young people and those with disabilities.
- 8.5. It is clear from the assessment above that Policy DM9's requirement to demonstrate the need for new facilities has been met. It is also clear from the above and from the accompanying Design and Access Statement that the development achieves a high-quality design that allows for flexible use and provides inclusive access for the local community.
- 8.6. The acceptability of the principle of the development has thus been established.

9. DESIGN

- 9.1. As has been set out in the accompanying Design and Access Statement, the driving design concept has been to provide an attractive and usable development with a clear entrance, good accessibility and a clear connection with the Site and associated activities. The design approach has been to provide a simple layout partnered with a 'clean' design, noting the restrictions of the Site.
- 9.2. It is proposed to locate the development at the edge of the club in a relatively discreet and somewhat isolated plot. This location was chosen due to the existing use, size, and accessibility but also so that any new facilities are subservient to both the original club building and courts themselves. It is an overarching objective of the team to create a relatively 'quiet' building that reflects the character of the club and surrounding area.
- 9.3. The proposed padel tennis courts are housed in three steel-framed structures with fabric roofs and noise retardant walls to 4.5m. The design of the courts is relatively utilitarian; this reflects a long history of sports facilities being housed in functional buildings. The northern elevation of the padel courts will be screened by the new groundskeeper's hut, which follows a more traditional design with a pitched roof. The form of these enclosures is dictated by their operational function, similar to the adjacent Tennis Sheds.
- 9.4. As detailed in the DAS, the visual integration of the facilities was one of the most important guiding principles for design decisions, and led to the creation of an entrance space which provides direct access to the new facilities. New padel courts will be directly accessed from the existing main pedestrian pathway of the site, with a new pedestrian pathway being created to provide convenient and easy accessible entrances to the courts.
- 9.5. It was noted acknowledged in the Councils pre-app response that the 'proposed padel courts and new groundkeeper's shed are of utilitarian design'. The Council however confirmed that the designed was appropriate for the proposed respective use and that the building would not be out of character with the established tennis/ fitness club.

- 9.6. In addition, the padel tennis courts and groundskeepers shed will, as is currently the case, be screened by mature vegetation from the residential properties to the east and south. The proposed development will therefore not be visible from the wider surrounding context.
- 9.7. The proposals thereby accord with the relevant design policies, including Core Strategy Policy CS17 (Local Character, Density and Design), and DMP Policy DM2 (Design and Amenity).

10. IMPACT ON THE AMENITY OF NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES

10.1. The proposed development has been carefully conceived and designed to avoid unacceptable impact on adjoining occupiers. There are no properties near the proposed courts and therefore the issue of amenity is limited to potential noise. This is addressed below.

Noise

10.2. A noise impact assessment has been prepared to accompany this application.

10.3. The Council's Environmental Health Officer (Noise & Pollution) reviewed the Noise Impact Assessment submitted at the pre-application stage and advised that it offered mitigation measures to reduce noise from the proposed activities at the nearest dwelling. The assessment used was considered to be adequate.

10.4. As part of the assessment a comprehensive noise survey was carried out to robustly quantify the existing prevailing noise climate in the area. Following this the potential noise impact from use of the proposed Padel courts has been assessed based on real world empirical data from a Padel court match at another tennis club which were then analysed in a computerised noise model. This model predicted likely noise levels as surrounding residential properties.

10.5. The findings of the assessment confirm that the proposed acoustic screens included as part of the development will ensure that noise levels will be within suitably low levels within the context of the prevailing noise climate and no adverse noise impact is anticipated. The proposals, therefore, accord with all relevant policy relating to neighbouring amenity.

11. TRANSPORT, PARKING AND WASTE

11.1. The proposed development of the padel tennis courts will have no material impact on either parking or transport on-site or in the surrounding area. This is detailed in the Transport Statement submitted as part of this application.

Transport and Parking

11.2. The Council's approach to parking is set out in Appendix 1 of the Development Management Plan 2015, which is supported by the Parking SPD 2020.

11.3. The general presumption should be that sufficient car parking should be provided in accordance with the parking standards and reliance should not be made of on-street parking unless it has been appropriately designed from the start (e.g. new large residential development). No additional parking spaces are proposed as part of this application.

11.4. A detailed Transport Statement is submitted in support of this application. It concludes that the proposed development will not have a detrimental impact on the highway or local transport network and is in accordance with relevant adopted national, regional and local policy guidance. It, therefore, meets the test of the NPPF and paragraph 111.

11.5. The Transport Statement details the current parking provision at the club, modes of transport and the likely change to movements created by the new facility. It confirms that the proposals are not expected to receive any increase in car or other trips or increased member duration of stay/parking accumulation as a result of the planning application. As outlined in detail the application replaces existing tennis courts with semi enclosed padel tennis courts. It is not expected that this will have a material impact on transport.

Waste

11.6. The proposed padel tennis courts are an integrated part of the broader tennis club. As such, in terms of waste, it will be serviced in the same way as the rest of the tennis club, making use of the existing servicing facilities for the Clubhouse. Thereby reducing vehicle movements.

11.7. The proposed courts are not expected to generate any additional waste comparable to the existing courts they are replacing.

- 11.8. The courts will not necessitate a requirement for regular deliveries and will be managed by the existing site management staff that are already present at the tennis club.

12. FLOODING & DRAINAGE

- 12.1. It is acknowledged that the Site is in an area designated in the Local Plan as an area of Medium Risk of Surface Water Flooding. The proposed design incorporates appropriate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) facilities as part of the drainage strategy and to mitigate flood risk.
- 12.2. A comprehensive Drainage Strategy and Flood Risk Assessment are submitted as part of this planning application. This concludes that Through the implementation of the tank, and other proprietary systems, the flood risk assessment has concluded that the proposed development neither increases the site footprint nor the potential for flood risk or flooding from the Site.
- 12.3. A below-ground attenuation tank of minimum volume 50m³ is proposed to attenuate surface water flows from the Site, which will then flow at a restricted rate of 2L/s into the existing 175mm diameter surface water sewer to the north the Site. This is a greater than 50% bettered flow rate in comparison to the existing brownfield runoff rate.

13. IMPACT ON TREES

- 13.1. Policy DM6 states that development proposals should be designed to include an integral scheme of landscape, tree retention protection and planting. Furthermore, DM6 seeks to result in no loss of, or damage to, trees and hedgerows that are, or are capable of, making a significant contribution to the character or amenity of the area, whilst development should adequately protect existing trees, including their root systems before, during and after the construction process.
- 13.2. The Site does not contain TPO trees, is not within a conservation area or is designated as Ancient Woodland. However, it has several mature trees that make a positive contribution to the visual amenity of the area. These trees shall be retained and protected as part of the proposals.
- 13.3. As part of the planning application, a comprehensive Arboricultural Planning Report has been submitted; this includes a tree survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) and Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS). The proposed development does not require the removal of any trees. As detailed in the APR the proposed development can be constructed without impact on any existing trees. It is acknowledged that the foundation of part of the proposed development fall slightly into one of the Root Protection Areas. However, as detailed this is considered acceptable since it is on the periphery of the RPA.

14. ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

14.1. The Council's pre-application letter stated that the planning application should be accompanied by an Ecological Appraisal. An Appraisal has been prepared by Wychwood Environmental Ltd and is submitted as part of this application.

14.2. The habitats present on the Site of the proposed development are of low ecological value according to the appraisal. The key findings from the appraisal are as follows:

- The property and tree have negligible potential to support roosting bats.
- The hedges and borders have habitat that could be considered potentially suitable for supporting common reptile species such as grass snake, slow worm and common frogs;
- There is no standing water on Site so there is negligible potential for newts.
- The hedgerows and monkey puzzle tree offer potential nesting habitats for a number of common garden and woodland bird species during the spring/summer months including priority/BAP species. A magpie's nest, active during the 2022 breeding season was found in the monkey puzzle tree.
- There were no signs of badger setts or badger movement.
- The Site was not considered suitable to support dormice
- The habitat within the Site was considered to have negligible suitability for hedgehogs, although they may enter the Site from the woodland and hedgerows to forage
- Given the size and nature of the proposed development is unlikely to have any negative effects on any of the sites designated for their conservation significance within 2km of the sites.

14.3. The recommendations within the report will be adhered to and if necessary can be secured by condition.

15. ARCHAEOLOGY

- 15.1. Policy DM12 of the Development Management Plan 2015 states that development proposals should take account of the likelihood of heritage assets with archaeological significance being present on the Site and assess the significance of such assets and enhance understanding of their value.
- 15.2. The LPA stated at the pre-app stage that an Archaeological Assessment should be provided as part of the application to determine the likely presence of heritage assets with archaeological significance on Site.
- 15.3. An Archaeological Assessment is submitted as part of this application. It concludes that the Site lies in an area with a High overall archaeological potential and that appropriate mitigation measures will need to be implemented during the development process.
- 15.4. The applicants acknowledge the above and will accept a suitably worded pre-commencement condition.

16. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 16.1. In addition to a formal pre-application meeting with the Council's planning team (detailed in the planning history section of this Statement), there has been ongoing public engagement and scrutiny of the proposed development by local residents and stakeholders.

- 16.2. The proposed development has been informed, where possible, by this proactive engagement programme. The undertaken engagement responds to the advice laid out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the published guidance in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (2021).

- 16.3. The project team undertook a robust public engagement programme in 2022 relating directly to this application. As the application site is located within the St George Hill estate, there is a requirement for approval of any development project, irrespective of the formal town planning process. The proposed development of club as a whole is subject to detailed and ongoing consultation with the local community through the Resident's Association application process.

17. CONCLUSION

- 17.1. This Statement assesses the proposed development in the context of planning policy at the national, regional, and local levels and other relevant and best practice guidance and material considerations.
- 17.2. As outlined, the proposed development is in accordance with and will deliver the objectives of all relevant development plan policies. The proposed padel tennis courts and associated works build on the existing situation and the club's long history of providing exemplary leisure and sports facilities to its members (many of whom are estate residents). The development will result in a substantially enhanced leisure offer, maintaining the club's pre-eminence and offering additional sports and additional employment opportunities for local people.
- 17.3. The scale, massing, materials, and architectural style of the proposed development respond to the existing character of the club. The supporting material detail how the applicant has ensured that the proposed introduction of padel courts will not impact unduly on the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers.
- 17.4. As outlined, the proposed development is in accordance with and will deliver the objectives of all relevant development plan policies. As such, the proposed development should be approved without delay.