

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**Construction of a domestic tennis court with surround fencing at
1 Northaw Place, Coopers Lane, Northaw, Herts EN6 4NQ**

On behalf of Lucy and Ian Holt

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Introduction

This Design and Access Statement provides information in support of an application for planning permission to allow the construction of a hard surfaced tennis court at 1 Northaw Place, Coopers Lane, Northaw, Hertfordshire EN6 4NQ. This statement covers the relevant information with respect to the issues required in the National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) adopted on 6th March 2014.

The Proposal

It is proposed to construct a hard surfaced tennis court with surround fencing within the grounds of 1 Northaw Place which is a grade II* listed building situated within the village of Northaw and close to Potters Bar in Hertfordshire. The location of 1 Northaw Place is shown in the attached location plan (see Figure 1).

Development Area

The proposed hard standing for the tennis court will be 17 metres by 35 metres and will therefore cover an area of 595 sqm (see Figure 2).

Location Details

It is proposed that the tennis court should be located within a discreet corner of the grounds in a lawned area screened by boundary hedgerow and trees. The site location is within long established domestic curtilage (in an area of the grounds which has been identified as garden in a report produced by Hertfordshire Gardens Trust).

The distance between the tennis court location and the house would be 72 metres. There would be a gap of around 12 metres between the north end of the court area and the adjacent boundary with an 10 metre gap to the boundary along the east side (see Figure 2). The gap between the south end of the court and the adjacent boundary would be around 9.5 metres.

Design Issues

The boundary of the playing area will be enclosed by open mesh fencing which will be 2.75 metres high at either end but dropping down to a lower height of 0.9 metres along the sides (see Figure 3).

The tennis court will have a 200mm limestone base with a further porous layer of macadam and green synthetic grass surface. The green coloured surface will include the court lines marked in white (see Figure 4). The porous surface will allow the court to drain quickly to avoid any surface water problems.

The fencing will be based on a high specification post and chain link system with all steel work galvanised and painted black. The use of black will help to ensure that the limited areas of open mesh fencing around the court are inconspicuous against the backdrop of soft landscaping along the garden boundaries.

Environmental Impact/Landscaping

In terms of screening, the court surface would blend well with the adjacent lawn in this area of the grounds (see Figures 5 photos). The existing hedges and trees will help to screen the court area and ensure no visual impact on the setting of the house (see attached Heritage Statement). The sensitively designed court will have no impact on longer distance views or the openness of Green Belt land.

Biodiversity Implications

The lawn in this part of the garden is cut on a regular basis and kept short throughout the year. The lawn does not therefore have any value in terms of providing a wildlife habitat. The court area would not have any impact on trees as it would be well beyond the root protection area of the nearest trees.

Policy Framework

The planning policy framework that provides the basis for determining this application is set out in a variety of local and national planning documents. At the national level, the main reference is the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF was first published in 2012 when it realigned the framework against which planning applications are determined by introducing a general presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The more recent revised version of the NPPF (July 2018) reaffirms the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 10 states *“So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development** (paragraph 11).”*

In looking at the detail of the Framework, there are a number of statements within the document which are of direct relevance to the determination of this application:

(i) Paragraph 91 emphasises the importance of the planning system promoting healthy communities and includes reference to the benefits of sports facilities. The proposed development of a new tennis court would provide a sports facility which would help to enhance the health and well being of the users.

(ii) Paragraph 96 also refers to the need to provide opportunities for sport and physical activity. The proposed development would provide a sports facility and thus accord with this policy objective.

(iii) Paragraph 127 sets out the need for high quality and appropriate design that is sympathetic to the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. The proposed development would incorporate high quality design that would minimise the visual impact and help the tennis court blend in with the surroundings.

(iv) Paragraph 145 explains that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are: “.....b) *the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation,as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.*”

(v) Paragraph 150 explains how new development should be planned for in ways that can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as through its location, orientation and design. One of the benefits that the tennis court would bring would be to reduce the need for the applicant’s family to travel away from the property in order to be able to play tennis. This reduction in car travel would help to reduce CO2 emissions.

Local Policies

The National Planning Policy Framework states that “*local policies should be “Consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework”* (see paragraph 35). In this case, the key document is the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan which was adopted in 2005. The policies which apply to this application are those which were “saved” in 2008 (and only in so far as they are consistent with the NPPF). The relevant policies are:

GBSP1 – Green Belt

D1 - Ensuring high quality design

It is considered that the proposed tennis court complies with the above policies. In terms of the Green Belt (GBSP1), the proposed court would provide a facility for sport and recreation and its sensitive design would ensure no impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF confirms that sporting and recreational facilities are an acceptable Green Belt use.

Turning to policy D1, the siting, scale, design and materials of the development are all considered to be sensitive to the character of the area. The court would not have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of the local setting (including the setting of the listed building) or the wider landscape (CP51).

In summary therefore, the proposed tennis court complies with the requirements of the national and local policy framework.

Principle of domestic tennis courts in the countryside

In the period since the Government introduced the NPPF there is very significant evidence to show that domestic tennis courts (including those in Green Belt land) are an accepted form of development in the countryside.

A list of examples of tennis courts which have been allowed in similar circumstances is provided in Figure 6.

Conclusions

This statement has shown that the proposed tennis court would be located within a discreet corner of the gardens of Northaw Place in a lawned area screened by boundary hedgerow and trees. The dark open mesh fencing and posts and green court surfacing will be unobtrusive against the backdrop of the soft landscaping. The sensitive design will ensure that the court area is inconspicuous and that there is no material adverse impact on the setting of the listed building or openness of the Green Belt.

The national and local planning policy framework provides support for recreational and sporting development in countryside areas as long as the development is designed sensitively and does not harm the local setting or character of the open countryside. Recent precedent since the introduction of the NPPF confirms that a tennis court and surround fencing is an acceptable form of development in the Green Belt.

The Government's revised National Planning Policy Framework makes it clear that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

It is clear that the proposed development will bring benefits and have no material adverse impacts and is consistent with the policy framework. On this basis, it is respectfully requested this application is approved.

Mark Jarman
Planning for Tennis
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