

Planning Statement

Mansfield Bowling Club, Croftdown Road,
Camden

Iceni Projects Limited
on behalf of Mansfield Bowling Club

January 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i. This report has been prepared by Iceni Projects Limited (Iceni) on behalf of Mansfield Bowling Club in respect of a planning application for:

'Refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing Clubhouse building to provide a new leisure and fitness facility and indoor Bowling Club, enabling development of 8 x 4 bedroom semi-detached residential units and landscaping works to provide areas of publicly accessible open space.'

- ii. Mansfield Bowling Club has occupied its current site at Croftdown Road for over 100 years. The main building on the site comprises a part 2/part 3 storey Clubhouse, with changing rooms and function room facilities, and a 6 rink indoor bowling green.
- iii. The Club is in serious financial difficulty and has seen falling membership rates for outdoor bowls, which culminated in the closure of the outdoor green in September 2011. Coupled with this, the existing Clubhouse building is outdated and in a poor state of repair and urgently requires significant financial investment.
- iv. As a consequence, the Club has applied to a number of charities and funding organisations, but has been unable to secure funding to refurbish the existing building and secure the future of the Club.
- v. Having reviewed the remaining options available, Mansfield Bowling Club is seeking planning permission for the enabling development of 8 x 4 bedroom family houses on the site in order to fund the necessary improvements to the existing Clubhouse and secure the longevity of the site going forward through the provision of a new community leisure offering. The enabling residential development will raise sufficient revenue to fund the refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing Clubhouse to provide a new community fitness and leisure facility as well as enhanced indoor bowling facilities.
- vi. Through appropriate design and following an assessment of financial viability, the proposed quantum of enabling residential floorspace has been kept to a minimum at the site, whilst being of an appropriate level to maximise benefits to the community. In addition, the proposed development will provide a total of £1,063,502 in Section 106 payments towards affordable housing provision and education.
- vii. This report provides further details on the background to the application and the planning case for enabling development.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This planning statement has been prepared by Icen Projects on behalf of Mansfield Bowling Club in support of a detailed planning application for the redevelopment of the existing bowling clubhouse and enabling residential development on part of the site alongside open space provision and landscaping works. The description of the proposed development is:

‘Refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing Clubhouse building to provide a new leisure and fitness facility and indoor Bowling Club, enabling development of 8 x 4 bedroom semi-detached residential units and landscaping works to provide areas of publicly accessible open space.’

- 1.2. This application has been prepared following pre-application meetings and discussions with Officers at Camden Council and in addition to previous applications for enabling residential development at the site.
- 1.3. The enabling residential development is limited in nature in respect of the size of the site and has been designed to be as limited as possible in generating the appropriate revenue to allow the comprehensive refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing Clubhouse to facilitate the expansion of leisure facilities and secure the long term security of the Bowling Club. A financial viability report has been prepared by Jones Lang LaSalle in support of this planning application and provides detailed evidence and cost appraisals to support this assertion.
- 1.4. In addition, the proposed enabling development will allow for opening up the site to provide formal areas of publicly accessible open space, intended for wider community use, as well as users of the site and facilities.
- 1.5. This application is supported by a number of technical documents which have considered the impacts of the proposed enabling development upon existing neighbouring uses as well as the impact upon the setting and character of the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area.
- 1.6. Section 2 of this report provides a brief introduction to the site and context of the application, Section 3 summarises the previous planning history of the site including pre-application discussions and Section 4 details the extent of the application submission. A short summary of planning policy is provided in Section 5 and the case for enabling development is clearly set out within Section 6. This report concludes with a short consideration of other relevant considerations within Section 7.

2. THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

a) The Site

- 2.1. Mansfield Bowling Club has occupied the existing site at Croftdown Road for over 100 years. The main building on the site comprises a part 2/part 3 storey Clubhouse, with changing rooms and function room facilities, and a 6 rink indoor bowling green.
- 2.2. The remainder of the site consists of car parking to the western boundary and formal private recreation space through the form of tennis courts, and an outdoor bowling green which has been closed since September 2011 following a lack of members and funds for its ongoing maintenance.
- 2.3. The site is located within a residential area, with boundaries to the site abutting rear gardens of properties in Croftdown Road, Regency Lawn, Dartmouth Park Avenue, Laurier Road and York Rise. Access to the site is currently served from Croftdown Road to the North West corner of the site.
- 2.4. All existing boundaries to the site are presently well screened by established landscaping and several large trees remain along the southern and eastern boundary of the site to Laurier Road and Dartmouth Park Avenue.
- 2.5. The topography of the site is such that the highest point is the north eastern corner, with the land falling to the west. This is reflective of the wider topography, with Croftdown Road running downhill from northeast to southwest and properties in Dartmouth Park Avenue, immediately adjacent to the site, being set considerably higher within the streetscape.
- 2.6. The site falls within the boundaries of the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area and is currently identified as Private Open Space within the Camden Council Core Strategy, save for the footprint of the existing Clubhouse.

b) Context of the Club

- 2.7. Mansfield Bowling Club is in serious financial difficulty and its Clubhouse is severely dated and in a poor state of repair. As a consequence the club has experienced falling membership rates over a number of years.
- 2.8. By way of example, many areas of the internal space have been permanently damaged by rainwater following the failure of the existing roof and the building fails to comply with current standards in respect of disabled access.

- 2.9. The Club has already been forced to close its outdoor bowling facility in September 2011 due to a lack of funding and without a permanent solution to its long term future would be forced to close permanently.
- 2.10. If the Club was forced to close permanently, the site would become vacant and would likely further fall into a state of poor repair both in respect of the existing Clubhouse and designated private open space.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1. Mansfield Bowling Club has an extensive planning history relating to the development of the current Clubhouse and other minor applications for temporary storage and tree works.
- 3.2. The most recent application relates to the temporary use of a car parking area of (0.064ha, 0.16acres) (Ref: 2010/2039/P) submitted on behalf of Apollo, a contractor working on behalf of Camden Council in respect of an estate renewal programme. Specifically planning permission was granted for the following development on 11th October 2010:

'Retention of temporary site in part of the car parking area to the south of the Mansfield Bowling Club building, comprising nine steel containers and associated hoardings for use as offices, storage and associated facilities for a period of 1 year, in connection with on-going external works to nearby residential buildings.'

- 3.3. This use has now ceased on site and the use has reverted to surplus car parking in association with the existing Clubhouse.
- 3.4. In addition, Mansfield Bowling Club has directly engaged with London Borough of Camden Council in formal pre-application discussions in November 2010 and January 2012 with respect to the provision of a limited scale of residential development on the site as a means of enabling development to facilitate the refurbishment and modernisation of the Club to secure its long term future at the site.
- 3.5. In November 2010, pre-application advice was sought in respect of the following proposals:

'Pre-application advice on provision of 9 residential units on the existing outdoor bowling green in the north most part of the site, in order to enable the refurbishment of the indoor bowling club. The residential proposals would also enable the possible relocation of the outdoor bowling green to where the existing outdoor tennis courts are presently located and for the tennis courts to be relocated to the southernmost part of the site in an area presently part car park, part long grass'

- 3.6. The pre-application advice was clear that the previous enabling development proposal would not be acceptable in principle, given that no justification had been given as to how the proposed development would meet wider aims of the Core Strategy. In addition, it was considered that the proposed economic case for enabling development had not been expressly justified and that no evidence had been submitted to demonstrate other potential sources of funding.

- 3.7. The advice further stated that any refurbishment and redevelopment of the site should take account of the Council's priorities and should look to diversify the potential use of the building beyond a Bowling Club. It was felt that the proposals merely re-arranged the existing uses on site and did little to diversify activities to provide a wider leisure offer.
- 3.8. In light of the pre-application advice received, Mansfield Bowling Club undertook a comprehensive review of the proposed development and principles raised, specifically with regard to the positioning of development on the site, potential alternative funding sources and the loss of open space. Further pre-application advice was sought in January 2012 in respect of the development of 10 residential units on the site of the existing tennis courts, refurbishment of the existing Clubhouse building and diversification of leisure uses including new Lawn Tennis Association compliant courts, cricket practice nets and associated landscaping.
- 3.9. Whilst issues of the loss of open space were again quoted by Camden Council, it was considered that efforts had been made to address previous concerns. Specifically the pre-application report commented:

'Policy CS15 provides a significant constraint on any development being considered appropriate on the private open space designated land at the site...It is evident from this policy context that any development of the nature which is sought could justifiably be refused by the Council on this basis. However, it is considered that a case may be able to be made for limited development at the site, on the basis that: a) the resultant scheme includes a tangible wider community benefit (or more probably a package of benefits), b) the proposed play/sport uses are viable in the long term, with the bowls facility sought to be made self-sufficient financially and c) any residential development should be minimised as far as it is viably possible, both in amount of floorspace on POS and number of units.'

- 3.10. In addition, advice was given in respect of the financial case for enabling development and the need for Mansfield Bowling Club to be open in their financial appraisals of the site, creating a level of transparency. Any financial information would be subject to independent assessment and scrutiny.

4. PROPOSED ENABLING DEVELOPMENT

4.1. In view of the planning history of the site and specifically the pre-application advice received in January 2012, Mansfield Bowling Club has sought to submit an application for enabling residential development which addresses the principal concerns of the Council being:

- a) The loss of Private Open Space;
- b) The provision of tangible wider community benefits;
- c) The long-term self sufficiency of the Bowling Club and viability of proposed sport/leisure uses; and,
- d) The limiting of residential floorspace to the minimum amount required

4.2. As a consequence, this application seeks approval for the following development:

'Refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing Clubhouse building to provide a new leisure and fitness facility and indoor Bowling Club, enabling development of 8 x 4 bedroom semi-detached residential units and landscaping works to provide areas of publicly accessible open space.'

4.3. In defining the proposed development, Mansfield Bowling Club has had specific regard to the existing site and the recognised need to provide maximum benefit to the community through the provision of an improved leisure offer in addition to the re-provision of bowling facilities. A principal driver in the new development has been the need to maximise the leisure offer to ensure the longevity of the site going forward. The proposed development has also had regard to the over-provision of tennis facilities within the local area, which has informed the decision to not include tennis courts as part of the proposed enabling development.

4.4. Having regard to the need to maximise the community offer, the refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing Clubhouse will include a reduced four lane indoor bowling green with ancillary facilities and a new community gym and leisure facility on the ground and first floors. The new gym facility would provide for two flexible studio spaces and it is envisaged the whole site would be managed by a highly experienced leisure operator.

4.5. Mansfield Bowling Club has advanced discussions with a London based community sport and leisure operator to manage all community and leisure facilities at the site. Consequently, this centralised management position will help secure the long-term future of the Club.

4.6. In reference to the proposed landscaping and recreation space to be provided across the wider site, the proposed development recognises the designation of the site as private open space,

acknowledging that a large percentage of this space is currently car parking and hardstanding and is inaccessible to anyone other than members of the existing bowling club.

- 4.7. Whilst the proposed development will include a small loss in the overall quantum of private open space on the site (8%), to facilitate the enabling residential development, it will not only improve the overall quality of the open space offer but will specifically provide publicly accessible open space which can be enjoyed by all members of the community. This publicly accessible open space will take the form of high-quality landscaped gardens and will provide a useable space for people to undertake informal recreation (increase of 7% on existing leisure and recreation space provision).
- 4.8. The refurbishment of the existing Clubhouse and provision of publicly accessible open space is underpinned by the development of eight x 4 bedroom semi-detached properties on the site of the existing tennis courts. The proposed enabling residential development would comprise three storey properties above ground with basements and would be arranged in two terraces with properties facing onto a shared amenity space. The properties would have on-site parking spaces and would remain separate from the Clubhouse proposals, being accessed by a newly constructed access to the north western corner of the site adjacent to number 1 Regency Lawn.
- 4.9. The number of houses has been reduced from ten to eight following pre-application advice received from officers at London Borough of Camden Council.

5. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1. This section provides a summary of the planning policy context within which this application will be considered. Specific reference is made to the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) and the London Plan (November 2011) to provide the National and Regional context of the proposals, and the Camden Core Strategy (2010) at a Local Level. Further reference is made to other policy guidance where relevant.

a) National Policy

i) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 5.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was adopted in March 2012 and replaced previous Planning Policy Guidance and Statements, aiming to provide one overarching policy document.
- 5.3. The NPPF is clear that the main objective of the planning system must be to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development including economic, social and environmental roles. With specific reference to these roles, paragraph 9 of the document specifically states:

'Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including (but not limited to):...

- Improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure...'

- 5.4. Paragraph 10 of the document goes on to state that the in seeking to achieve sustainable development, due consideration should be had to local circumstances when considering decision making. Such consideration should be in response to the different opportunities that different areas present in achieving sustainable development.
- 5.5. With a presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the NPPF, the document goes on to provide some specific guidance with reference to planning and paragraph 17 sets out 12 core planning principles which should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. Paragraph 17 acknowledges that planning should:

'-not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives.'

5.6. Additionally, paragraph 17 further advises that planning should:

‘- take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.’

5.7. The emphasis of the NPPF upon sustainable development and the fulfilment of economic, social and environmental roles is a step-change in planning and sees an increased emphasis upon the social alongside the physical environment. The proposed planning application has had specific regard to this approach and acknowledges the need to consider the social environment. With respect of the refurbishment of the Bowling Club and provision of wider community facilities, the development aims to specifically respond to paragraph 70 of the NPPF which further emphasises integration:

‘To deliver social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:...

- ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community; and*
- ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.’*

5.8. Through a small level of enabling development, the existing Bowling Club site will be transformed and opened up to the wider community to incorporate modern facilities which will be professionally run by a London based community sport and leisure operator. The identification of the facilities to be provided as a result of discussions with the Local Planning Authority ensures that such facilities are the type that the community needs and will be sustainable in the long term. Furthermore, the proposed enabling development has been minimised in its form and location on the site to ensure an integrated approach on the site.

b) Regional Policy

i) The London Plan – Spatial Development Plan for Greater London (2011)

5.9. At a Regional Level, the London Plan adopted in July 2011 sets the wider planning policies to which applications for development must conform. The London Plan establishes specific development guidelines which apply to all London Authorities and seeks to provide overarching guidance on new development within London. Of specific relevance to the proposed development are policies relating to Housing and Living Places and Spaces.

- 5.10. Policy 7.18 of the London Plan relates specifically to Protecting Local open Space and Addressing Deficiency. At a strategic level this policy states that the Mayor is supportive of the creation of new open space within London and further goes on to clarify in respect of planning decisions that:

'The loss of local protected open spaces must be resisted unless equivalent or better quality provision is made within the local catchment area...'

- 5.11. In relation to the proposed development, whilst the protection of local protected open space is acknowledged as the starting point for assessment, it is clear that the existing site is designated as private open space. As a consequence, a considerable percentage of the site is poorly maintained open space or hardstanding and car parking. Furthermore, the private nature of the site limits access to only private members and users of the Bowling Club.

- 5.12. Through enabling development, the small loss of this poorly maintained and unused space will be replaced with a significant area of high-quality publicly accessible open space. The new area of space will be of greater quality both in terms of physical quality and recreational quality and will fully accord with the aims of the London Plan in this regard.

- 5.13. In addition to guidance on open space, the London Plan provides comment on housing within London. Such policies deal more specifically with the supply and location of new housing, but Policy 3.5 provides guidance on the Quality and Design of Housing Developments. Whilst the proposed residential development is not a stand-alone application and is intrinsically linked as enabling works to the refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing Clubhouse, it is considered that parts of the policy still apply to the proposed development. Part B of Policy 3.5 states:

'The design of all new housing developments should enhance the quality of local places, taking into account physical context, local character, density, tenure and land use mix; and relationships with, and provision of, public, communal and open spaces, taking particular account of the needs of children and older people.'

- 5.14. In consideration of the enabling residential development, careful regard has been had to the ability of the proposed development to respect and enhance the quality of the local environment from the siting of the proposed built form, to the relationship of the development to newly provided public accessible open space and community facilities. The residential units are proposed to be 21 metres away from the nearest neighbouring properties at Croftdown Road and given the topography of the site adjacent properties in Dartmouth Park Avenue are 5.2 metres above the site at ground floor level. As a consequence, the proposed residential

properties will be set significantly below these neighbouring houses and will comfortably comply with existing policy standards.

c) Local Policy

i) London Borough of Camden Core Strategy (2010)

5.15. At a Local Level, the Camden Core Strategy adopted in 2010 provides the policy specific context within which planning applications are considered. The Core Strategy sets the overall vision for the growth of the Borough over the Plan period.

5.16. A number of specific policies were referred to in the pre-application response received from Officers at Camden Council. This section aims to summarise the key policies in relation to the proposed development.

5.17. In recognition of the site's existing designation as private open space, the most significant policy in respect of the proposed development is Policy CS15 – Protecting and improving our parks and open space and encouraging biodiversity. Policy CS15 adopts a protectionist stance in respect of designated open space stating:

'The Council will protect and improve Camden's parks and open spaces. We will:

a) Protect open spaces designated in the open space schedule as shown on the Proposals Map, including our Metropolitan Open Land, and other suitable land of 400sqm or more on large estates with the potential to be used as open space...'

5.18. The supporting text to this policy further reinforces the protectionist stance and paragraph 15.6 clearly states:

'The Council will protect the open spaces designated in the open space schedule shown on the Proposals Map, as well as other suitable land with the potential to be used as open space...We will not allow development on these open spaces unless it is for limited development ancillary to the use taking place on the land and for which there is a demonstrable need...The poor quality of an open space will generally not be accepted as a reason for its partial development to fund improvements as, once built on, open space is lost to the community for ever.'

- 5.19. However further to this protectionist stance, Policy CS15 further recognises that there may be opportunities to improve open space through development including the ancillary facilities provided such as recreation and sports facilities. In respect of the proposed enabling development, it is clear that the present site is inaccessible and extremely poor quality, and is associated with a private members club. The current open space provides no benefit to the community and is largely composed of a number of areas of car parking and hardstanding.
- 5.20. The Mansfield Bowling Club site is recognised as being a Private Open Space within an area of Public Open Space Deficiency within the Borough as identified on Map 7 (Open Space) at paragraph 15.9 of the Core Strategy. The proposed development provides the opportunity to help address this deficiency and create open spaces at the site which are publicly accessible and will replace existing areas of hardstanding.
- 5.21. The proposed development includes provision for 8 family houses as enabling development to fund the refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing Clubhouse. Policy DP5 of the Core Strategy refers to new housing provision and the need to provide Homes of different sizes, specifically stating:

'The Council will contribute to the creation of mixed and inclusive communities by securing a range of self-contained homes of different sizes. We will:

- a) seek to ensure that all residential development contributes to meeting the priorities set out in the Dwelling Size Priorities Table, including conversion of existing residential and non-residential floorspace;*
- b) expect a mix of large and small homes in all residential developments...'*

- 5.22. The Dwelling Size Priorities Table referred to in the policy identifies a very high demand for 2 bedroom open market properties and a medium demand for 3 and 4 bedroom properties. As a starting point, the Council would seek the provision of 2 bedroom properties in all new open market developments. Notwithstanding this, the policy does provide flexibility in the application of these identified priorities and only seeks provision of dwellings to meet very high priorities where it is practicable to do so (paragraph 5.5).

- 5.23. In addition, paragraph 5.7 of Policy DP5 states:

'The Council will be flexible when assessing development against policy DP5, the dwelling size priority table, and the aims set out in paragraph 5.5. The mix of dwelling sizes appropriate in a specific development will be considered taking into account the character of the development, the site and area...'

5.24. The residential houses in the proposed development are the key element to enabling the wider benefits of refurbishing and reconfiguring the existing Bowling Club to provide new leisure and fitness facilities and publicly accessible open space. Unlike a stand-alone residential development, the enabling role of residential floorspace in the proposed development results in a particular quantum of development and value being achieved. The provision of 2 bedroom family houses would therefore not achieve the necessary value to fund the wider site improvements and ensure the long term future of Mansfield Bowling Club. The impact of development economics upon the application of dwelling sizes is recognised to be a key consideration at paragraph 5.14 of the Core Strategy.

5.25. If 2 bedroom properties were to be provided at the site, due to existing sales values, the quantum of units to be provided would need to be significantly greater than the 8 units proposed as part of the current application. By inference, a greater area of land would also be required. As a consequence, in strictly adhering to meeting the priority housing mix, the wider impact upon the loss of open space would be amplified and any resultant development would cause a significantly greater loss of open space than is proposed under the present application.

5.26. With specific reference to Community and Leisure Uses, Policy DP15 of the Core Strategy advises that the London Borough of Camden Council will seek the protection of community facilities and resist their loss across the Borough. The proposed development recognises the provisions of this policy and is structured to ensure the protection and enhancement of the existing community and leisure facilities on site. Additionally, the development will provide the minimum amount of enabling residential development to secure the sustainable long-term future of Mansfield Bowling Club and provide a new community leisure facility. This is justified in greater detail in the supporting Viability Assessment prepared by Jones Lang LaSalle accompanying this application.

ii) Camden Planning Guidance and Area Appraisals

5.27. In addition to policies in the Core Strategy, it is recognised that there are a number of Supplementary Planning Guidance Documents including Camden Planning Guidance 2 (Housing) and Camden Planning Guidance 8 (Planning Obligations), which are applicable to the proposed development. The guidance contained within the Planning Guidance documents relates largely to the design or development and potential contributions from development. This guidance is addressed in other supporting documentation, including the Design and Access Statement produced by Hopkins Architects and Viability Assessment prepared by Jones Lang LaSalle.

5.28. It is also acknowledged that the site sits within the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area and regard must be had to the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area Appraisal and Management

Statement adopted on 22nd January 2009. Mansfield Bowling Club is located in the heart of the Conservation Area and is identified by this document as being cited within the St Albans Road Sub Area.

- 5.29. Paragraph 7.89 of the Conservation Area Appraisal specifically identifies the existing setting and character of Mansfield Bowling Club and states that:

'...tucked away from the road to the south is the Mansfield Club, an open space for bowling and tennis that is identified in the UDP as a private open space, with steeply-rising views in a splendid bowl-like formation, of the gardens and backs of houses in Laurier Road and Dartmouth Park Avenue.'

- 5.30. Whilst recognising the important setting of the site, the Conservation Area Appraisal goes on to identify the Mansfield Bowling Club building as a negative building within the Conservation Area and specifically acknowledges on Page 46 that:

'Buildings and spaces which detract from the character or appearance of the Conservation Area...could, through sensitive enhancement or redevelopment, contribute more positively...'

- 5.31. In recognition of the negative contribution of the existing building, the proposed development seeks to comprehensively refurbish the exterior of the existing Clubhouse, to provide a sensitive enhancement of the site and a positive contribution to the wider Conservation Area. Furthermore, the proposed enabling residential development will be of a similar scale to the existing residential properties within the surrounding environment and reflective of existing scale and massing, consisting of 3 storeys and basements. The proposed residential properties are sited 21 metres away from the nearest neighbouring residential properties at Croftdown Road and given the topography of the site are set (at ground level) 5.2 metres below the ground floor level of properties in Dartmouth Park Avenue. Consequently, the properties are considered to be in the most appropriate position in this regard. Further details on the specific design merits of the proposals are included within the supporting Design and Access Statement produced by Hopkins Architects.

6. THE CASE FOR ENABLING DEVELOPMENT

6.1. As set out in the preceding sections of this report, the proposed development involves an element of enabling development in order to fund the refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing Clubhouse building to ensure the long term survival of Mansfield Bowling Club. This section sets out the case for this enabling development making direct reference to pre-application advice and the planning policy framework where appropriate.

i) Previous Proposals and the Need for Enabling Development

6.2. This planning application to refurbish and reconfigure the existing Bowling Clubhouse to provide a new leisure and Bowling facility, facilitated by a small residential development of 8 x 4 bedroom family houses, has been driven by the need to secure the long term future of Mansfield Bowling Club.

6.3. As previously mentioned in this report, Mansfield Bowling Club has experienced decline over a number of years and falling membership rates, coupled with increased maintenance and repair costs that has left the Club in a difficult financial situation. This culminated in the closure of the outdoor bowling green in September 2011 due to the costs involved in maintaining this outdoor facility.

6.4. Despite efforts to increase revenue through hiring out the existing Clubhouse for community events and utilising existing kitchen facilities to provide external catering services, the Club is currently facing a financial situation which will force them to close down permanently without significant and sustained investment. The unintended consequence of this would be the dereliction of the existing site and further degradation of the existing Clubhouse building and open space.

6.5. The Club has previously sought pre-application advice on the principle of enabling development prior to January 2012, but such efforts were subject to a number of negative responses from Officers at London Borough of Camden Council, and in hindsight were considered to be short-termist and not sympathetic to either the long term future of the Club, or the sensitivities of the existing site and Conservation Area.

6.6. In contrast to these previous proposals, the development, subject of this application, has been designed with regard to the existing context of the site, both in terms of its physical nature and its current role within the existing community. The proposed development goes beyond merely maintaining a private Bowling Club on the site and seeks to maximise the opportunity that is presented to provide for a wider and sustainable sports and leisure facility, which is open and of benefit to the wider community.

- 6.7. The refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing Clubhouse is to be funded by a small scale enabling development of 8 x 4 bedroom family houses, which will provide the necessary revenue for the wider enabling works. A full financial viability assessment has been prepared by Jones Lang LaSalle in support of this application. This viability assessment further demonstrates that the amount of floorspace proposed has been designed to be the minimum it can be to fund the wider redevelopment and secure the long term future of Mansfield Bowling Club.

ii) Loss of Open Space

- 6.8. As previously identified, the site is currently identified as being an area of private open space in the Core Strategy, save for the existing Clubhouse building. This allocation has not been based on an assessment of quality and has been applied to the wider site in a non-discriminatory manner, to the extent that this designation fails to recognise that the site is at present only accessible to private Club Members and is of a poor quality with large areas of the site being used for car parking. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that the site accommodates an outdoor bowling green (now closed), 2 clay tennis courts, which are in poor condition and in use by a private members club, and several small areas of inaccessible and unmaintained grassland. As a consequence, the use and quality of the external leisure space on the site is extremely limited at present.
- 6.9. The proposed enabling development seeks to reconfigure the external open space at the site and create formal landscaped gardens which will be publicly accessible and will replace existing areas of hardstanding at the site. The proposed development further proposes the replacement of limited and restricted leisure facilities with areas of improved open space aiding the quality provision within the area. With specific reference to the loss of the existing tennis courts, it is demonstrated within the supporting Sports Business Plan produced by the Sports, Leisure and Culture Consultancy that demand for tennis is in decline and that there is currently an oversupply of tennis courts within the immediate area (2km of the site).
- 6.10. Whilst it is acknowledged that Policy CS15 specifically states that the poor quality of an existing open space will not provide justification for its development, it is considered that this policy is more directly applicable to developments which propose redevelopment of an open space independent of a wider development. The residential element of the proposed development is enabling development to secure the long term future of Mansfield Bowling Club and is considered to be the only viable alternative to the complete loss of the existing Club. In this regard, it is considered that in order to secure the long term future of the Club and to significantly increase the community offer at the site, the loss of some existing poor quality and private open space and replacement with high quality publicly accessible open space is acceptable within the terms of this policy.

6.11. In further consideration of the loss of open space, it must be acknowledged that the existing site is located within an area of Public Open Space Deficiency as defined on the Core Strategy Proposals Map. The proposed development presents the opportunity to contribute to addressing this deficiency within the area through the provision of a large area of formal landscaped publicly accessible open space on the site.

iii) Securing the Future of Mansfield Bowling Club

6.12. In recognition of the poor financial situation of the existing Club and the need for significant investment to secure the Club's long term future, Mansfield Bowling Club reviewed a number of options in seeking to secure financial support prior to pursuing the option of enabling development.

6.13. Mansfield Bowling Club has been unable to secure appropriate funds from financial institutions due to issues of affordability and the high interest payments associated with such borrowing. Furthermore, even if such finance were to be secured, such a cash investment would not guarantee the long term future of the Bowling Club and would not have provided the security and surety the Club is seeking to achieve.

6.14. In light of the inherent costs and difficulties associated with borrowing from financial institutions, the Club further sought to apply to charitable organisations and funding bodies to secure their long term future. Such bodies are specifically geared towards helping individuals or small organisations and are able to offer affordable loans or grant funding where appropriate.

6.15. In total, applications and enquiries were made to 40 charitable organisations and funding bodies, including for affordable finance from large nationwide bodies such as The Big Lottery Fund, Sport England and The Princes Trust, to local organisations including Team London Small Grants Programme and The Camden Society. Of these 40 applications, many were unable to provide financial help due to the private nature of the existing Club, and where financial help was available, the amount available was negligible compared against the level of investment needed to secure the long term future of the Club.

6.16. As a consequence of these unsuccessful funding attempts, the Club concluded that the only viable way of securing the long term future of the Bowling Club and providing wider open space and community leisure benefits was through limited residential enabling development on part of the site. Following a viability assessment it was determined that 8 houses were needed to fund such works. This viability assessment has been prepared by Jones Lang LaSalle and is submitted in support of the planning application.

6.17. This viability assessment clearly demonstrates that the proposed enabling development can fund the building and leisure improvements to the existing Clubhouse, as well as provide on-site publicly accessible open space, and further provide financial contributions to Camden

Council in accordance with the guidance set out within Camden Planning Guidance 8 in respect of Planning Obligations.

- 6.18. It is considered that the small scale enabling development has been fully justified in financial terms and has been designed to be the minimum amount possible to secure the long term future of the Club and ensure the maximisation of publicly accessible open space and community leisure facilities at the site.

iv) Leisure and Recreation

- 6.19. The proposed enabling development seeks to maximise the leisure and recreational opportunities presented as a result of the refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing Clubhouse.

- 6.20. It is acknowledged by Mansfield Bowling Club that the site has been previously underutilised and has largely remained closed to members of the wider community for a number of years. It is further acknowledged by the Club that their existing facilities are not sustainable in the long term and that there was a need to explore a wider leisure offering that could become the principal use at the site to ensure the longevity of the site going forward. The proposed refurbishment seeks to address this by providing a new community leisure and recreational facility within the reconfigured Clubhouse. Whilst principally focussed on a gym and active studio classes, the indoor space has also been designed to be flexible allowing for space to be used by local community groups for activities other than sport. The proposed development will provide a significant community offer and will fully accord with the aims and aspirations of officers at Camden Council who promoted the wider use of the site during pre-application discussions.

- 6.21. Additionally, it is envisaged that the wider community and leisure offer at the site will be managed by a London based community sport and leisure operator. This new management proposal will ensure that there is a clear structure in place to ensure the professional operation of the combined leisure and Bowling Club in the future and secure the Bowling Club's long term ambitions at the site.

v) Impact upon Neighbouring Properties

- 6.22. The application site is bounded on all sides by existing residential properties, with the topography of the site and surrounding area being such that the properties to the eastern boundary along Dartmouth Park Avenue and Laurier Road sit considerably higher than the ground level of the existing Club at present. This is equally true of properties to the northern boundary of the site along Croftdown Road.

- 6.23. In consideration of the existing setting of the Club and site itself, the proposed enabling residential development has been proposed to the north eastern corner of the site, where the current tennis courts are situated. The siting of the proposed residential properties in this location ensure that they are situated away from all neighbouring properties and have the least impact in visual terms. This siting was further supported by Camden Council in their pre-application report, stating:

'The siting of the residential component in the north-east corner of the site appears the most suitable from an amenity perspective, mainly owing to the existing trees and distances involved to Dartmouth Park Avenue.'

- 6.24. The proposed properties are not immediately adjacent to any existing residential boundaries and are designed to mirror the rhythm and form of existing properties within the area being set 21 metres from the nearest neighbouring properties in Croftdown Road and comfortably conforming to current planning policy standards. In addition, neighbouring properties in Dartmouth Park Avenue are 5.2 metres above the site at ground floor level, resulting in the proposed properties being set significantly below these neighbouring houses. As a consequence, it is not considered the properties will have an adverse impact upon any neighbouring property in respect of overlooking, loss of light or overbearing. Whilst the new properties will be able to be seen from existing properties in Dartmouth Park Avenue, Laurier Road and Regency Lawn, it is considered that their sympathetic design and setting will not adversely impact upon these properties.
- 6.25. With regard to the existing Clubhouse and wider landscape improvements, it must be borne in mind that the existing Clubhouse Building will remain in its existing position and whilst subject to external alterations, will not increase in mass or bulk as a consequence of the proposed enabling development. In respect of this, it is considered that the proposed development will have a positive impact upon neighbouring properties in York Rise and Regency Lawn to the south and west of the site in visual amenity terms. In addition, landscape improvements to the rear of these properties will improve screening of benefit to their existing amenity.

vi) Impact upon the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area

- 6.26. As acknowledged in the Dartmouth Park Conservation area Appraisal adopted by Camden Council in November 2008, the existing Mansfield Bowling Club building is a negative building in the St Albans Road Sub Area and could contribute more positively through sensitive enhancement or redevelopment.
- 6.27. Through the refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing Clubhouse building, it is considered that the proposed development will have a positive impact upon the Conservation Area and will enhance the existing building and overall setting of the site. The proposed external alterations have been designed to create a modern and functional space, whilst

respecting the existing scale and massing, which will further serve to enhance the appearance of the Conservation area.

- 6.28. Recognising that improvements to the Clubhouse will not happen without investment as a consequence of the enabling residential development, it is considered that the design and setting of the proposed residential properties are of equal importance to the setting of the Conservation Area. In view of this, it is noted that the proposed residential properties have been designed to reflect the scale and nature of existing properties within the area and are reflective of the classic proportions without appearing as a pastiche of this style. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed properties will respect and enhance the setting of the Conservation Area.

vii) Housing Mix

- 6.29. In acknowledgement of Policy DP5 of the Core Strategy, it is clear that Camden Council will seek the provision of 2 bedroom properties in new developments as this represents the greatest need within the Borough at present. The demand for larger 3 and 4 bedroom properties has been assessed to be medium at present by Camden Council.
- 6.30. The proposed development is seeking to provide 8 x 4 bedroom family houses. Notwithstanding the provision of Policy DP5, it must be recognised that the proposed residential development is the enabling part of the development and provides the necessary revenues to fund the refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing Clubhouse to secure the long term future of Mansfield Bowling Club and provide a new community and leisure facility. As demonstrated in the Viability Statement produced by Jones Lang LaSalle in support of this application, it is the size of units which generates the necessary values to fund the proposed improvements and a smaller size of unit would make the scheme financially unviable, or alternatively would require a greater number of residential units and area of land for development which would result in a greater loss of Private Open Space.
- 6.31. In addition, the proposed residential development is to be open market with an off-site contribution to affordable housing of £826,677. This contribution is the maximum viable contribution based on the costs of the proposed development of 8 x 4 bedroom family houses and the new leisure and fitness facility.

viii) Section 106 Matters

- 6.32. In respect of Section 106 matters, it is clear from the accompanying Financial Viability Assessment produced by Jones Lang LaSalle that the proposed enabling development is finely balanced and has been kept to a minimum in order to restrict the loss of open space, whilst maximising benefits to the community through the provision of a new leisure facility and publicly accessible open space.

- 6.33. The level of Section 106 contributions for an off-site contribution to affordable housing is proposed at £826,677. This proposed contribution is guided by the Viability Assessment undertaken by Jones Lang Lasalle in support of this application and is reflective of the maximum viable contribution based on the costs of the proposed development.
- 6.34. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed contribution of £826,677 is below the contribution expected of a housing scheme of this size, it is simply not financially viable for the proposed enabling development scheme to provide the maximum contribution alongside other Section 106 payments and the new leisure and fitness facility. If a higher affordable housing contribution were to be provided, it is considered that a greater number of units and greater quantum of floorspace would need be required, which would lead to a greater loss of Private Open Space than is currently proposed.
- 6.35. In addition to this affordable housing contribution, and having regard to the level of contributions set out within the previous pre-application advice and Camden Planning Guidance 8, it is proposed that a further financial contribution of £210,202 is made towards:
- Education: £171,952 (£21,494 per residential unit).
 - Pedestrian, Cycle and Environmental Improvements: £20,000.
 - Estimated Camden Council Professional and Legal Fees: £18,250 (£365 per head of term).
- 6.36. It is not proposed that a contribution is made to the provision of public open space due to the fact that the proposed enabling development provides a significant amount of publicly accessible open space on the site and will create a new leisure and fitness facility for use by the public and local community.
- 6.37. The total proposed Section 106 payments are £1,036,879.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 7.1. Mansfield Bowling Club is currently in a poor state of repair and requires significant investment to secure its long term future. Through a small scale enabling residential development of 8 x 4 bedroom family houses, the existing Clubhouse can be comprehensively refurbished and reconfigured to provide a new leisure and fitness facility, improved bowling facilities and publicly accessible open space for wider use by the community.
- 7.2. The proposed enabling residential development will generate the necessary revenue to facilitate improvements to the existing Clubhouse and has been designed to be the minimum amount required on the site, as evidenced in the supporting Viability Report produced by Jones Lang LaSalle. The proposed family houses are considered not to impact upon the amenity of neighbouring properties by fully complying with current policy standards, and the overall development will positively contribute to the character of the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area.
- 7.3. Acknowledging the existing policies in the London Borough of Camden Core Strategy, the proposed development has been designed to minimise the loss of existing underutilised and poor quality private open space, and to further provide a significant area of on-site publicly accessible open space, which will help meet the current and documented deficiency within the area.
- 7.4. Furthermore, the proposed new bowls and leisure facility is intended to be managed by a London based community, sport and leisure operator providing an additional long term leisure and recreation facility within the area.
- 7.5. The enabling development proposals are considered to accord with policies within the Camden Core Strategy and will create a positive benefit to the local community, whilst ensuring the long term future of Mansfield Bowling Club. The proposed enabling development will also provide a Section 106 contribution of £1,036,879 towards affordable housing provision and education.