

Reference number: 2022/5320/P
Mansfield Bowling Club, Croftdown Road, Camden,
London NW5 1EP



Mansfield Bowling Club new proposals comments **from Councillor Sian Berry, Highgate Ward, Green Party**

I am writing in support of the decision of the council to reject this application earlier this year and to object to the proposals being granted permission on appeal.

As ward councillor for the area, I am acutely aware of the strength of feeling locally towards this open space, and was involved in opposing the earlier proposals and in the appeal process, which led to consent for a limited residential development on this site along with restoration of sporting uses and open space (2012/6593/P).

Over many years of considering alternatives for this site, the local community has developed and adopted a settled view now of the potential - within limits - for new residential uses alongside sporting and open space on this site.

These views are reflected in a number of specific policies in the adopted Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Plan (DPNP), including the adoption of the remaining open space (outside the footprint of the consented building) as a Local Green Space – a very strong protective designation. These are reproduced below

The value placed by the community on this site is also shown by its earlier designation as an Asset of Community Value, which states that it *“has been in social/leisure use since at least 1890”*.¹

Given the large amount of scrutiny and consideration this site has had from the local community, and given that the inspection and adoption of the DPNP comes after consent was given on appeal to the earlier proposals and therefore take this consent into account, I believe that planning officers and decision-makers must give the highest possible weight to the policies in the DPNP and the views of the Neighbourhood Forum (DPNF) in respect of this new application.

I would also like to add some specific comments of my own on a number of aspects of the proposals:

Scale and massing:

The proposed building does not match the scale and massing of the formerly consented scheme and this alone should provide grounds to reject these proposals.

¹ Asset of Community Value application based on draft local listing. See other submissions and Camden consultation document: https://consultations.wearecamden.org/culture-environment/draft-local-list-and-supporting-guidance-2/supporting_documents/Draft%20Local%20List_101013.pdf

At four storeys plus basement, with additional height encroaching towards surrounding streets, particularly Laurier Road, the proposals do not match either the previous permission or the aspirations of the community expressed through the DPNP.

These plans must be rejected and a smaller and more appropriately sized care home development proposed instead. This is entirely possible in a commercially viable way and no compromise must be made on this aspect of the plans.

Design:

I support comments made by a number of local residents and the DPNF that the design of the building, particularly the elevations visible at the entrance and from Laurier Road, is disappointing and not sympathetic to or in keeping with surrounding buildings. At the very least a further design review must be conducted, ideally involving the DPNF and DPCAAC as advisors, aimed at making significant improvements to this aspect of the proposals. In their current form, these breaks from policy create grounds for rejection alone.

Open space:

The DPNP designation of the site as a Local Green Space, and the wider policies for the site place emphasis on the need for publicly accessible open space at this location. Therefore I question the balance proposed between tennis courts and the children's play area and open space for the community.

If the proposals are rejected I would like to see a larger public open space included in new proposals. This would likely also lead to a greater potential for new biodiverse green space, further supporting local policies.

Travel and transport:

The applicants have provided commitments through a draft travel plan on promoting sustainable staff and resident travel, reducing vehicle movements and parking impacts. However, the nature of care home use is that resident wellbeing depends on receiving a large number of visits from friends and family, and being taken out on visits and trips by friends, family and staff.

This aspect of the transport impact of the site has been completely neglected in the submitted documents, aside from a commitment to inform visitors of public transport options. An assessment of likely visitor trip generation must be provided, with any potential impacts on the local area fully mitigated.

The application documents state in more than one place that there is no specific policy on care home parking standards, but that does not mean that wider policies for assessing impacts of 'development' in general do not apply.

I strongly suspect that a realistic assessment of the visitor travel impacts would support the conclusion that the size and number of units proposed exceeds the ability to mitigate its impact on the local community in terms of traffic and travel.

Overall and in conclusion:

I do not believe this proposal yet meets either the policies or aspirations of the local community for this site. While a sensitively designed and high-quality development that meets these policy requirements would be an improvement on the current neglect and disuse of the site, these proposals should be rejected and feedback provided that allows the applicants to come back with improved proposals in future.

Councillor Sian Berry**February 2023**sian.berry@camden.gov.uk**Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Plan policies against which these proposals must be weighed:**

(<https://dpnf.org.uk/index.php/the-plan/>)

Policy DC1 Enhancing the sense of place

(c) ensuring that multi-unit developments in areas predominantly characterised by traditional terraced, semi-detached and detached housing will have scale and massing which respects that of surrounding buildings.

Policy DC3 Requirement for good design

Require that all developments demonstrate good quality design, responding to and integrating with local surroundings and landscape context. In Dartmouth Park good design means:

(a) achieving high quality design that respects the scale, mass, density and character of existing and surrounding buildings and preserves the open and green character of the area;

(b) relating developments to the urban landscape value of the street setting, including respecting the established orientation and grain of existing development, established building set-backs, and arrangements of front gardens, walls, railings or hedges;

(c) relating developments to established plot widths in the streets where development is proposed, particularly where they establish a rhythm to the architecture in a street;

(d) where multi-storey developments are permitted in accordance with the other policies in this Plan, avoiding juxtaposition of buildings of significantly different scale and massing and incorporating a gradual transition from the scale of the surrounding built context where appropriate;

(e) ensuring that any extensions or modifications to existing buildings are subordinate to the existing development and in keeping with its setting, including the relationship to any adjoining properties;

(f) using good quality materials that complement the existing palette of materials used within the immediate area;

(g) providing within the development boundary sufficient appropriately sited and well integrated amenity space, refuse and recycling storage, bicycle and mobility vehicle parking and storage, and delivery space (as appropriate to the size and type of development) to ensure a high quality and well managed streetscape; and

(h) in construction or alteration of shopping and other commercial frontages in the Neighbourhood Centres, ensuring that the development contributes positively to the accessibility, sense of place and individual character of the Centre. In particular, solid external security shutters and shops that do not provide access to everyone will be resisted.

Chapter 9: Specific Neighbourhood Sites

Mansfield Bowling Club

9.29 The Mansfield Bowling Club site has an important heritage: Baroness Burdett-Coutts gave it to the community for outdoor recreational use. The community wishes to see it used again fully for this purpose.

9.30 It may not be possible to return it exactly to how it was in the days of John Betjeman's boyhood as he recalled it in his well-known poem 'NW5 N6' ("I see black oak twigs outlined on the sky, Red squirrels on the Burdett-Coutts estate"), but the community wishes to try so far as possible.

9.31 Crucially, therefore, the site is in part a designated area of private open space. The Forum supports the retention of this open space, particularly as the site is within an area that Camden Council has identified as deficient in open space. The site has also been designated as an Asset of Community Value. The site is also included in the list referred to in Chapter 7 of open spaces to be designated as Local Green Spaces.

9.32 The present status of the site is that an application for planning permission for development was refused by Camden Council but has been permitted on appeal (APP/X5210/W/16/3153454). It should be noted that the community does not consider that the proposed development would be an appropriate development. The Plan supports the refusal given by the Council.

9.33 Various alternative schemes have been considered by the community, which has formed a Community Interest Company for the purpose of acquiring the site, although it is currently anticipated that the consented commercial development will be taken forward. As noted above, the Forum encourages the consideration of the community aspirations set out in this Chapter in any future applications relating to this site.

9.34 As noted above, the community's strong preference is for the Mansfield site to remain wholly in use for sport, leisure and recreation purposes. The Forum is not seeking to allocate the site for development. However, should development proceed on this site, we would support a scheme incorporating the following principles:

- The development would be residential only and would not exceed the density provided for in the current consent.

- The total footprint of the development would not exceed that of the previous bowling club building and would not intrude into the green space reserved for leisure activities as shown on Fig. 6.
- The design of new housing would respond positively to the characteristics of surrounding residential development and in particular will be informed by the terraced typologies that are prevalent in the surrounding area.
- The development will be expected to provide the maximum amount of affordable housing provided for in the Local Plan policies and this Neighbourhood Plan.
- Provision should be included for intermediate housing that will help meet the needs of local teachers, nurses and other medical staff.
- Any development should be car-free, in accordance with Camden Local Plan Policy T2 (Parking and car-free development).
- The part of the site shown in Fig. 6 would be reserved for sport / leisure / recreation purposes and would be publicly accessible.
- The developers would put in place procedures to ensure that the open space is sustainably managed and maintained for the future for the benefit of the public.

Appendix 4 Open Spaces

Part A Local Green Spaces

1. Mansfield Bowling Club open space. As outlined in Chapter 9, planning consent exists for the redevelopment of Mansfield Bowling Club. However, the planning consent granted on appeal requires the retention of the current open space, which is partially occupied by tennis courts. Designated as a private open space, the site has an important heritage: Baroness Burdett-Coutts gave it to the community for outdoor recreational use. Designation as Local Green Space will help ensure that it remains in use for this purpose.

