



Committee Report

Planning Committee North - 18 May 2021

Application no DC/21/0453/FUL

Location

Southwold Tennis Club
Hotson Road
Southwold
Suffolk
IP18 6BS

Expiry date 7 April 2021

Application type Full Application

Applicant George Bennett

Parish Southwold

Proposal Removal of existing sheds and portakabin and construction of new clubhouse

Case Officer Michaëlle Coupe

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1. Summary

- 1.1 Planning permission is sought for a new clubhouse building at Southwold Tennis Club's existing site on Hotson Road.

Reason for Committee

- 1.2 The application is before Planning Committee (North) because the land on which the tennis club is sited is owned by East Suffolk Council.

Case for the Development

- 1.3 The proposed new clubhouse for Southwold Tennis Club will provide this well used community facility with new and improved facilities to replace existing substandard accommodation. The site is well located in terms of access to the local community and provides coaching and competitive play for those that are interested. The club hopes to

encourage more children to play tennis. Being centrally located within the settlement means it is close to residential properties and amendments are expected to the scheme to ensure the facilities do not result in any increased undue harm to local residential amenity, together with controls over the usage of the building and times used. Further information is also expected to address the Highway Authority concerns regarding any potential increases in on-street parking.

Recommendation

- 1.4 The recommendation is therefore **Authority to Determine with Approval** being recommended subject to the outstanding issues being satisfactorily resolved.

2. Site description

- 2.1 Southwold Tennis Club lies on the north side of Hotson Road, within the settlement boundary. It is outside the Conservation Area but within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. The club dates back to 1928 and consists of three flood-lit courts; a portacabin providing club room and changing facilities; and two sheds, one of which is a small shop. There are a small number of benches for spectators. The club currently have a membership of just under 200.
- 2.2 There are two-storey houses each side of the site and at the rear the site backs onto the rear gardens of properties in Pier Avenue.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 The club, having recently taken on a new 20-year lease, want to improve the clubhouse facilities to provided improved changing facilities (currently no showers) and new clubroom with bar and kitchen and shop. A two-storey building is proposed flanked on both sides by tiered spectator seating that links with a balcony feature that wraps round three sides of the building, overlooking the courts. The building has a floor area of 138.62 square metres.
- 3.2 The height of the building is kept as low as possible, just over 6m tall from the pavement level. Its design has an Art Deco aesthetic, using the dark green colour of Wimbledon, plus more natural timber cladding on the first floor. The main Hotson Road elevation is clad with Living Wall - a cladding of natural irrigated plants to provide a landscaped feel to the main facade. The roof is zinc with integrated Viridian photovoltaic panels installed on the southern roof slope to provide as much free electricity as possible.
- 3.3 There is no parking associated with the existing facility. There will be three pedestrian access points from Hotson Road, one of which will direct access into the building for club members. Disabled access including level entry thresholds and lift are provided.

4. Consultations/comments

- 4.1 Twelve representations have been received, one of which is in support of the proposals, and the others (11) (including Ward Councillor David Beavan) raise the following key concerns (inter alia):

- serious overlooking of residential properties from the raised seating and balcony;
- increased noise levels from the clubhouse bar area;
- the building will become a social hub negatively impacting on local residents;
- the bulk and height of the building is not in keeping with its surroundings;
- the building is too big, visually overbearing/dominant and incongruous;
- the facilities should be provided at ground floor level only;
- the size of the clubhouse is out of proportion with the members it would serve;
- the increase in membership will lead to increased demand for parking causing further congestion and parking problems in the area; and
- the provision of a bar would encourage its use for functions.

4.2 Councillor Beavan comments:

"Much as I support the tennis club, I find this two storey building unacceptable in planning terms and unnecessary for a three court club. The club bar will overlook neighbours perhaps causing noise from the balcony. It could easily be sited at ground level with a perfectly good view of the courts. The facilities could be all located on the ground floor if the Wimbledon style seats were removed from the wings. A two-storey block right on the pavement will impact severely on the street scene in Hotson Road."

5. Consultees

Parish/Town Council

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Southwold Town Council	12 February 2021	5 March 2021
<p>Recommend Refusal</p> <p>This proposal is to redevelop the built facilities of a small community tennis club with 3 courts that can be used by a maximum of 12 people and competes in local tournaments with clubs from other market towns such as Lowestoft.</p> <p>The site is owned by East Suffolk District Council and leased to the club. The Town Council values the club as an important community facility. Recently, when its future in Southwold hung in the balance due to uncertainty over whether its lease would be renewed, the Town Council advised the Tennis Club to seek ACV status and supported its application.</p> <p>The courts are located on a restricted site in a residential neighbourhood, with fencing abutting houses on the east, west and south boundaries of the site. There is a narrow strip of land separating the courts from the public highway. The existing facilities take up about a third of this strip and are less than one story.</p> <p>The proposal calls for a two story structure that appears to run the length of the south boundary, which would be built up to the pavement. This is contrary to the pattern of development on Hotson Road where all of the housing (flats, terraces, and detached buildings) have front</p>		

gardens. It would eliminate the open space created by the courts, giving views of trees in the background, which is a positive feature of this streetscape and contributes to the character of this part of Southwold. It would have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of a number of neighbouring dwellings by virtue of its over-dominating quality, over-looking of gardens and windows, and loss of privacy. On this last basis alone, the application should be denied.

The D & A cites an out-of-date policy to support this application. The policy that should be applied is WLP8.29 – Design. This states (Para 8.167): ‘It is a primary aim of the planning system that development should deliver good standards of amenity for existing and future occupiers and surrounding uses and does not generate significant harmful effects. Harmful effects can arise from over-looking, loss of privacy, noise and light pollution, and overbearing development amongst others.’

WLP8.29 – Design sets out a number of criteria that a proposal should demonstrate to obtain consent. This proposal

- does not reveal a clear understanding of the form and character of the built environment;
- does not respond to the local context and the form of surrounding buildings in relation to overall scale and character, layout, site coverage, height and massing of existing buildings, and the relationship between buildings and spaces and the wider street scene or townscape; or
- protect the amenity of the wider environment and neighbouring uses.

Para 128 of the 2019 NPPF (Design) states: 'Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.'

The applicant did not engage with the Town Council beforehand or, we are told, with neighbours in an attempt to understand impacts and potential mitigation. The proposed facilities are intended to generate additional customers/revenue. This means more visitors and more cars. Contrary to WLP8.21 – Sustainable Transport, the proposal does not meet the requirements set out in Suffolk Guidance for Parking issued by Suffolk County Council.

In sum, for all of the above reasons, we ask that this application be refused.

Statutory consultees

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Suffolk County Council Highways Authority	12 February 2021	4 March 2021
Summary of comments: The proposal would likely see an increase in the parking demand from those wishing to use the new clubhouse. As there is no proposed parking on the site, this may result in an increase of on-street parking which could result in inappropriate parking, that poses a risk to highway safety. It is also		

worth noting that this area already experiences a high demand for on-street parking with many properties not having off-street parking available to them.
Our objection can be overcome if it can be evidenced the development will not have a significant detrimental impact on the current on-street parking demand.

Non statutory consultees

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Head of Environmental Services and Port Health	12 February 2021	4 March 2021
Summary of comments: A noise impact assessment should be undertaken to consider the likely impact of noise from the proposal on nearby residents.		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service	N/A	18 February 2021
Summary of comments: Advisory comments regarding fire safety.		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Southwold And Reydon Society	N/A	12 March 2021
Summary of comments: Recommend refusal on the grounds that the scale of the proposed building is over-development for the area and it will overlook adjacent properties which will result in their loss of privacy. There appears to be no provision for parking, for which we think there will be an increased demand, in an area which already has issues with on-street parking. The need for another venue in Southwold with a bar is questioned and the resultant problem of increased noise in a residential area.		

6. Site notices

General Site Notice

Reason for site notice: General Site Notice

Date posted: 26 February 2021

Expiry date: 19 March 2021

7. Planning policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF)

East Suffolk Council - Waveney Local Plan, Adopted March 2019 policies:

- WLP8.22 - Built Community Services and Facilities

- WLP8.21 - Sustainable Transport
- WLP8.29 - Design

8. Planning considerations

- 8.1 All applications are required to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act). The above-mentioned policies of the East Suffolk District - Waveney Local Plan are considered relevant. The NPPF is a material consideration in the decision making process.

Principle of Development

- 8.2 Local Plan policy WLP8.22 indicates that proposals for community services and facilities (which includes sports venues) will be supported if the proposal meets the needs of the local community, is of a proportionate scale, well related to the settlement which it will serve, and would not adversely affect existing facilities.
- 8.3 The tennis club has been in existence at this site since 1928. It provides coaching for both junior and adult members. Membership is currently 196 including 70 junior members. Group coaching sessions are organised for children in the evenings and at weekends and the club does compete with other tennis clubs in the region.
- 8.4 It is accepted that the club's existing facilities are extremely poor, comprising a portacabin with inadequate changing facilities and very limited space for club members to meet and congregate inside. The proposed building would thus provide significantly improved changing facilities and space to be able to extend the learning indoors through watching video and teaching technique. The club want to encourage more children to join and play tennis, and therefore intend to visit local schools and clubs to attract more interest. The club room would also mean parents accompanying their children would not have to sit outdoors waiting for their lesson to end. It is envisaged the building would be available for all members to use and hold meetings and fund-raising events. The use of the courts generally finishes around 9.30pm in the evenings; this is the time when the floodlights are required to be turned off.
- 8.5 The need for the facility is evident by the length of time the club has been operating. It is located within the settlement boundary of Southwold and within walking and cycling distance for a significant number of members that live in the town and nearby village of Reydon. Provision is made on site for enclosed bike storage. The clubroom occupies most of the first floor except for a small office. It is in the region of 60 square metres and is not considered excessive for the number of members the club has. It is thus considered the proposed facility would comply with policy WLP8.22.

Impact on residential amenity

- 8.6 There has been a significant amount of local opposition to the new building largely on the grounds of overlooking and noise and disturbance from those using the bar/clubroom, particularly as there is direct access onto a balcony that surrounds three sides of the building. It is considered that the privacy of residents living both sides could be adversely affected by the balcony without some screening being introduced. The length of the balcony and its

linkage to the spectator seating both sides of the building is also of concern. The property to the east does have windows to habitable rooms in the gable end and their privacy would be affected by the use of the balcony and spectator seating at this end of the site. The building is in the region of 60m from the rear of properties in Pier Avenue which is considered a reasonable distance to avoid undue loss of privacy to the occupants.

- 8.7 The applicants seek to address the issues of overlooking and have suggested installing a tight weave mesh to the existing 4-metre-high open weave wire mesh fence on the site boundaries. Further details of this have been requested, by officers, to assess whether it would act as an effective screen preventing overlooking.
- 8.8 Concerns have been raised about the provision of a bar in the sense of it being a drinks venue. However, the applicants confirm this is not the case and state that:

“the bar is merely an opening/counter between the kitchen and the main club space. The hope is that tea, coffee, soft drinks and snacks will be made available on a day to day basis, but through a self-service, vending machine style approach. The clubroom space has two purposes:

- 1. The first is for the gathering of members, family and friends to enjoy, relax and to watch their children and loved ones play tennis. Somewhere we can hold trophy presentations and fundraising events.*
- 2. The second is to be used as an interior coaching space. When the inevitable rain comes and the coaching groups have to be cancelled it has an impact on the income of the coaches and the income of the club. The ability to take players inside to watch and discuss tactics, game play, work on flexibility will enable coaching to continue uninterrupted.”*

- 8.9 Further consultation has been undertaken with Environmental Services to ascertain if this additional information would address their concerns regarding potential noise impacts. If the building is only used by the tennis club for activities associated with the club, and that the building be vacated by 10pm, officers consider that this is not considered unreasonable.
- 8.10 Whilst further information has been sought in respect of these matters, officers are of the view that the general form of the building is acceptable in amenity terms. With appropriate additional information and/or amendments to the scheme, officers consider that the proposal can be considered acceptable in amenity terms in accordance with WLP8.29.

Access and Parking

- 8.11 Regarding access and parking, the existing facility does not have any parking associated with it, and members that do arrive by car would have to park on the road.
- 8.12 With regard to increased traffic and parking the applicants confirm that:

“We are currently at 192 members, ranging from the ages of 6 to 82, 100 of which are based in Southwold and Reydon, another 42 from the surrounding towns and villages and the rest are from further afield. Many of our members walk or cycle to the club, but of course members have the choice to drive if they wish. There is on street parking for at least 6 cars along the front of the club, which although not designated to the club, are used. In the winter months the requirement for parking is never a problem and in the summer season, players that drive do have to park further away. There is of course the Pier Car Park (2mins walk away) and a

new one proposed for the entrance of the town (2mins walk away). We encourage our members to walk and cycle where possible and we are more than happy to recommend those parking facilities to those who drive when on street parking is a problem. Our players are and have always been very considerate of our neighbours.”

- 8.13 Further consultation with the Highway Authority has been undertaken based on the applicant’s further details regarding usage and their present arrangements and an update will be given at the meeting and via the update sheet published 24-hours before the meeting. Local Plan policy WLP8.21 seeks to encourage development proposals to travel using non car modes to access home, school, employment, services and facilities. This is effectively being met through the location of the club within the centre of the settlement and close proximity (within cycling distance) to Reydon, and there being safe pedestrian routes to the site and on-site facilities for cycle storage. It is therefore officers view that there are no highways ground to refuse this application, which would be in accordance with WLP8.21.

Design and impact on the character of the area

- 8.14 Local Plan policy WLP8.29 "Design" requires that developments respond to local context and the form of surrounding buildings in relation to the overall scale and character, layout, site coverage, height and massing of existing buildings, the relationship between buildings and spaces and the wider street scene or townscape and by making use of materials and detailing appropriate to the local vernacular.
- 8.15 The site is not within Southwold Conservation Area. Hotson Road consists of largely two-storey scale properties, and there are a mix of property styles and sizes within the road. There are some terraced houses, semi-detached properties as well as detached houses. The two-storey scale of the building is thus not out of scale with the existing buildings in the road. It is positioned at the back edge of the footway but has to be because of the very limited space that exists between the road and the tennis courts. It will be forward of existing properties in the road but not significantly so as the dwellings only tend to have a relatively small front garden. Its position within the centre of the site frontage will mean space either side of the building of approximately 11m. The building itself is approximately 21m long and under 4m wide. The cladding of the main Hotson Road elevation with a Living Wall of natural irrigated plants will provide a landscaped feel to the main facade, as well as improving the biodiversity of the site.
- 8.16 The applicants confirm that:

“The plan to remove the current, broken wooden fence and bring the front of our new clubhouse to our boundary is for three reasons:

1. The first is to gain some welcome additional width to the clubhouse.

2. The second is to drastically improve the impact we have on the street scene with a planted facade.

3. The third, and most important, is to more safely and securely manage the points at which members and non members enter the site.

At the moment you can enter the site from the street without a key or padlock. The courts are padlocked, as is the clubhouse, but if a member already happens to be playing, both facilities can be accessed without us knowing who they are.

The new design moves the restriction of entry to the boundary of the site. This means that as a member you will have to enter through the main clubhouse door with your key

card. Non-members will be able to go online, book and pay for a court to get a code that will only allow you to enter the site through the guest entrance at the time for which you have booked. Making the management and security of the club far more efficient.”

- 8.17 The appearance of the building will be unlike the domestic properties in the street, largely because it reflects its different function, and that in itself is not unacceptable - particularly given the mix of housing styles that exist. The building is an interesting design that will, it is felt, complement the existing streetscene, and its scale is respectful of its surroundings in line with the aims of policy WLP8.29.
- 8.18 The inclusion of photovoltaic panels in the roof of the building will seek to reduce carbon emissions and is a positive design feature in accordance with local and national planning objectives to incorporate renewable/sustainable energy systems.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 Subject to the concerns identified above being satisfactorily resolved, it is considered that the proposed new facilities will help to support an existing community facility that meets the needs of the local community and encourages people to be active with positive health benefits, as encouraged by national planning guidance and the Local Plan. Controls over the use and timing of the facility, via planning condition, are essential to ensure the use can operate without causing harm to the amenity of adjacent residents.
- 9.2 On balance, therefore, the scheme is considered to be acceptable and positively recommended.

10. Recommendation

- 10.1 **Authority to Determine** with **APPROVAL** being recommended subject to the receipt of satisfactory revised plans/information that address the concerns raised regarding the potential impacts on neighbour's residential amenity and highway safety; and subject to the following controlling conditions.

11. Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within a period of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be completed in all respects strictly in accordance with revised plans for which permission is hereby granted or which are subsequently submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority and in compliance with any conditions imposed by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt as to what has been considered and approved.

3. Details of all external facing and roofing materials shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before development commences. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory external appearance of the development.

4. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) and The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking or re-enacting the said Orders) the facilities within the building hereby permitted shall only be used in association with the existing tennis club and for no other purpose.

Reason: The use of the building for uses unrelated to the tennis club would have the potential to cause harm to the amenity of local residents and character of the area.

5. The building shall not be used after 10pm.

Reason: In the interests of protecting the amenity of nearby residents.

6. Prior to the building first being used cycle storage shall have been provided in accordance with details that have previously been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. It shall thereafter be retained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory provision of cycle storage and encourage people to travel by non-car modes in the interests of sustainable travel.

7. The first-floor window in the east elevation of the building shall be fitted with obscure glazing and thereafter retained as such.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity.

8. Prior to the building being occupied the screens shall be erected on the eastern and western ends of the balcony in accordance with details that have previously been submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. The screens shall thereafter remain in place in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the amenity of neighbours are protected.

Informatives:

1. The Local Planning Authority has assessed the proposal against all material considerations including planning policies and any comments that may have been received. The planning application has been approved in accordance with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and local plan to promote the delivery of sustainable development and to approach decision taking in a positive way.
2. East Suffolk Council is a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Authority.

The proposed development referred to in this planning permission may be chargeable development liable to pay Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) under Part 11 of the Planning Act 2008 and the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended).

If your development is for the erection of a new building, annex or extension or the change of use of a building over 100sqm in internal area or the creation of a new dwelling, holiday let

of any size or convenience retail , your development may be liable to pay CIL and you must submit a CIL Form 2 (Assumption of Liability) and CIL Form 1 (CIL Questions) form as soon as possible to CIL@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

A CIL commencement Notice (CIL Form 6) must be submitted at least 24 hours prior to the commencement date. The consequences of not submitting CIL Forms can result in the loss of payment by instalments, surcharges and other CIL enforcement action.

CIL forms can be downloaded direct from the planning portal:

https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200136/policy_and_legislation/70/community_infrastructure_levy/5

Guidance is viewable at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy>

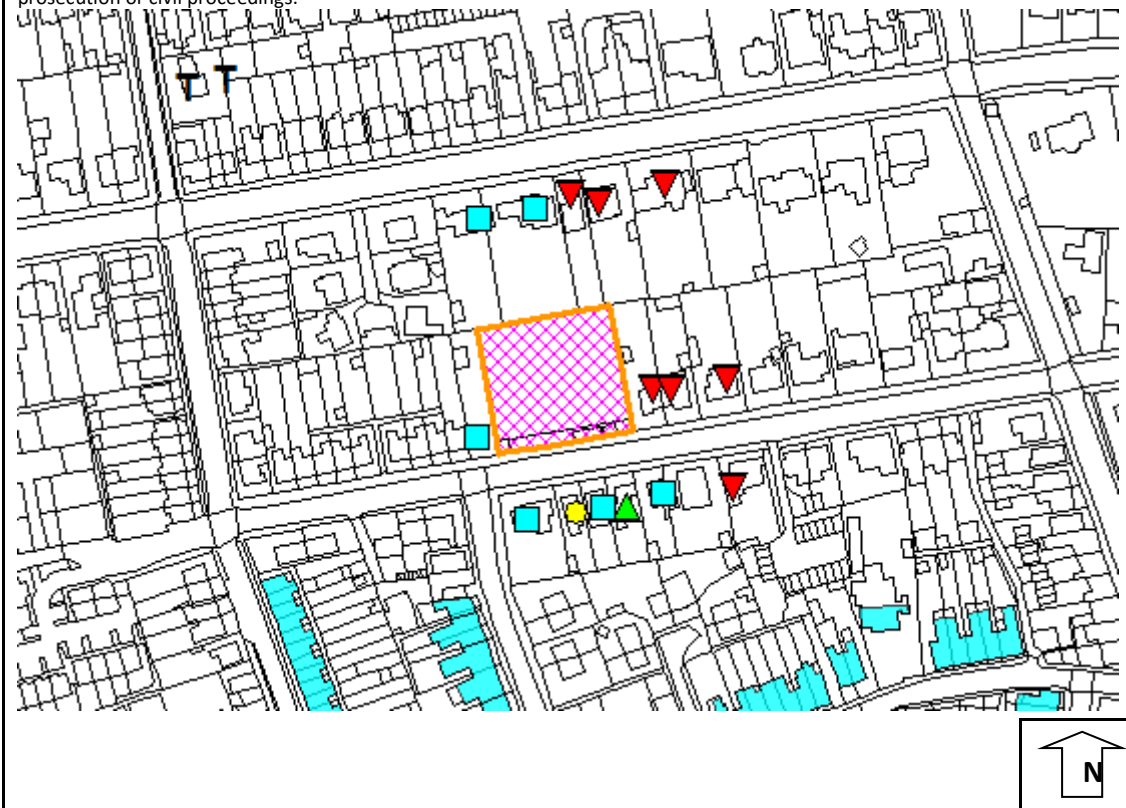
Background Papers

See application reference DC/21/0453/FUL on [Public Access](#)

Map

DO NOT SCALE SLA100019684

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Key



Notified, no comments received



Objection



Representation



Support