

## Wimbledon Park Golf Club

in the London Boroughs of Merton and Wandsworth

### The proposal

Functional extension of All England Lawn Tennis Club to include a new show court (6,000-8,000 seats), demountable temporary stands, other tennis infrastructure and landscaping works.

### The applicant

The applicant is **AELTC** and the architect is **Allies and Morrison**.

### Meeting attendees

#### GLA

- John Finlayson, Head of Development Management
- [REDACTED], Team Leader – Development Management

#### Applicant team

- [REDACTED], AELTC
- [REDACTED], Rolf Judd
- [REDACTED], Allies and Morrison
- [REDACTED], LUC

1 The advice given by officers does not constitute a formal response or decision by the Mayor with regard to future planning applications. Any views or opinions expressed are without prejudice to the Mayor's formal consideration of an application. It is recommended that the applicant pursues Level 2 GLA pre-application advice in due course, to receive advice across the full breadth of strategic issues that the Mayor will consider. Further information of the GLA pre-application service is available on the City Hall website at: [www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/pre-planning-application-meeting-service](http://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/pre-planning-application-meeting-service).

### Summary of meeting discussions

2 The applicant team outlined the site and local planning context. It is noted that Wimbledon Park Golf Club is designated as Metropolitan Open Land and is also a Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden. The formal landscaping of Wimbledon Park dates back to C16, and following successive reworking, part of an C18 park survives (having been extended and re-landscaped by Lancelot Brown for the first Earl Spencer). It is understood that the Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden is currently identified as 'at risk' given the progressive erosion of historic landscape features due to the modern golf course layout and planting.

3 The applicant team outlined proposals for a functional extension of the All England Lawn Tennis Club to include a new show court (6,000-8,000 seats),

demountable temporary stands, other tennis infrastructure and landscaping works intended to respond to the history of Wimbledon Park. The rationale for the extension is to allow for qualifying rounds to be played at the Wimbledon site – creating a three-week event (rather than two weeks currently) in line with other major world tennis tournaments. Summary advice in relation to the principle of this development in strategic planning terms is set out below.

## **Principle of development**

### Sports and recreation

4 The applicant seeks an extension of the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) in order to host tournament qualifying rounds at the Wimbledon site and to reinforce the function and status of this world-renowned elite sporting venue.

5 London Plan Policy 3.19 and Intend to Publish London Plan Policy S5 seek to ensure there is sufficient supply of good quality sports and recreation facilities in the capital. These policies acknowledge that existing open space may come under pressure to meet need for built sports facilities. In this regard Paragraph 5.5.3 in support of Intend to Publish London Plan Policy S5 states:

*“Built sports facilities should only be accommodated on green open space if that area has been identified as surplus to requirements as per an open space strategy or the development is for alternative sports and recreation provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss of green open space.”*

6 In this case it is noted that Wimbledon Park Golf Club has a prevailing sports use as a golf course. GLA would, nevertheless, still expect this scheme to be considered in the context of the local open space assessments for Merton and Wandsworth, and to explore any and all opportunities to mitigate any existing instances of local open space deficiency as part of the package of public benefits. In principle considerations with respect to the need to ‘outweigh the loss of green open space’ (Metropolitan Open Land in this case) are set out below.

### Metropolitan Open Land

7 The London Plan and Intend to Publish London Plan afford Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) the same level of protection as Green Belt (refer to London Plan Policy 7.17, Intend to Publish London Plan Policy G3 and the NPPF).

8 Whilst the primary function of the proposed AELTC extension will be for qualifying rounds of lawn tennis (appropriate outdoor sport), the associated grass courts would necessarily be accompanied by other temporary and permanent infrastructure and development (for example the new show court) that would be considered inappropriate development for the purposes of the NPPF and London Plan. Therefore, it will be necessary for the applicant to justify the existence of very special circumstances that would clearly outweigh the harm to MOL and any other harm. This should address the need case and should also include a package of public benefits that individually or collectively would clearly outweigh any harm.

9 Based on the information provided to date, the applicant team are looking at a varied package of ‘planning gain’ focusing on delivering public benefits and

community outreach well beyond the proposed three-week duration of the tennis tournament on-site. This is strongly supported. The details are still emerging at this stage, but the key themes are around increased community access and outreach, improved public open space, ecological enhancement and historic landscape restoration. GLA officers broadly support the emerging concepts, however, it is essential that the key MOL openness impacts and public benefits of the scheme are scoped out at the earliest possible stage so that a clear steer on overall acceptability in planning terms may be given. In this regard GLA officers expect to discuss the proposed development and public benefits package further at a level 2 GLA pre-application meeting in due course.

### Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden

10 As discussed above, Wimbledon Park (Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden) is registered as 'at risk' in heritage terms. It is understood that the re-landscaping of the site with long fairways for its use as a golf course has effectively begun to erode some of the surviving C18 park features. Notwithstanding this, it is acknowledged that much of the shrub and tree planting introduced at the site by the golf club (outside the more heavily mown and managed areas of the course) has reached a good level of maturity, and now positively contributes to local ecology and biodiversity. Accordingly, GLA officers seek a carefully coordinated and multidisciplinary approach to landscape enhancement and Registered Park and Garden restoration. This should ensure that the key historic characteristics of Wimbledon Park may be revealed/appropriately referenced, whilst allowing for high quality components of more recent planting (especially mature/semi mature native trees) to be sympathetically retained wherever possible. Where an appropriate balance can be found, GLA officers are of the view that landscaping enhancements to the Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden could form an important part of the public benefits package of the scheme. GLA officers expect to discuss this further at a level 2 meeting in due course, and prior to that, the applicant team is strongly encouraged to engage with The Gardens Trust.

### **Conclusion**

11 The principle of extension of the AELTC in order to host tournament qualifying rounds at the Wimbledon site and reinforce the function and status of this world-renowned sporting venue is strongly supported in strategic planning terms. Notwithstanding this, given the proposal would include 'inappropriate development' on MOL, very special circumstances must be demonstrated that would clearly outweigh harm to MOL openness and any other harm. GLA officers are of the view that landscaping enhancements to the Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden could form an important part of the public benefits package of the scheme. Nevertheless, a carefully coordinated and multidisciplinary approach is required in this regard in order to appropriately balance heritage and ecological priorities at this site. The applicant is strongly encouraged to engage further with GLA officers in order to discuss the proposed development and public benefits package further at a level 2 GLA pre-application meeting in due course.

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for further information, contact GLA Planning Unit (Development Management Team):  
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