

Email: planning@ashteadresidents.org.uk

3rd March 2025

Mole Valley District Council
Pippbrook
Dorking
Surrey
RH14 1SJ

For the attention of Chris Yeoell

Dear Mr Yeoell,

Planning Application No: MO/2024/2179

Location: Ashtead Tennis Club, Woodfield Lane, Ashtead, Surrey, KT21 2BQ

I write on behalf of the Ashtead Residents' Association with regard to the above planning application.

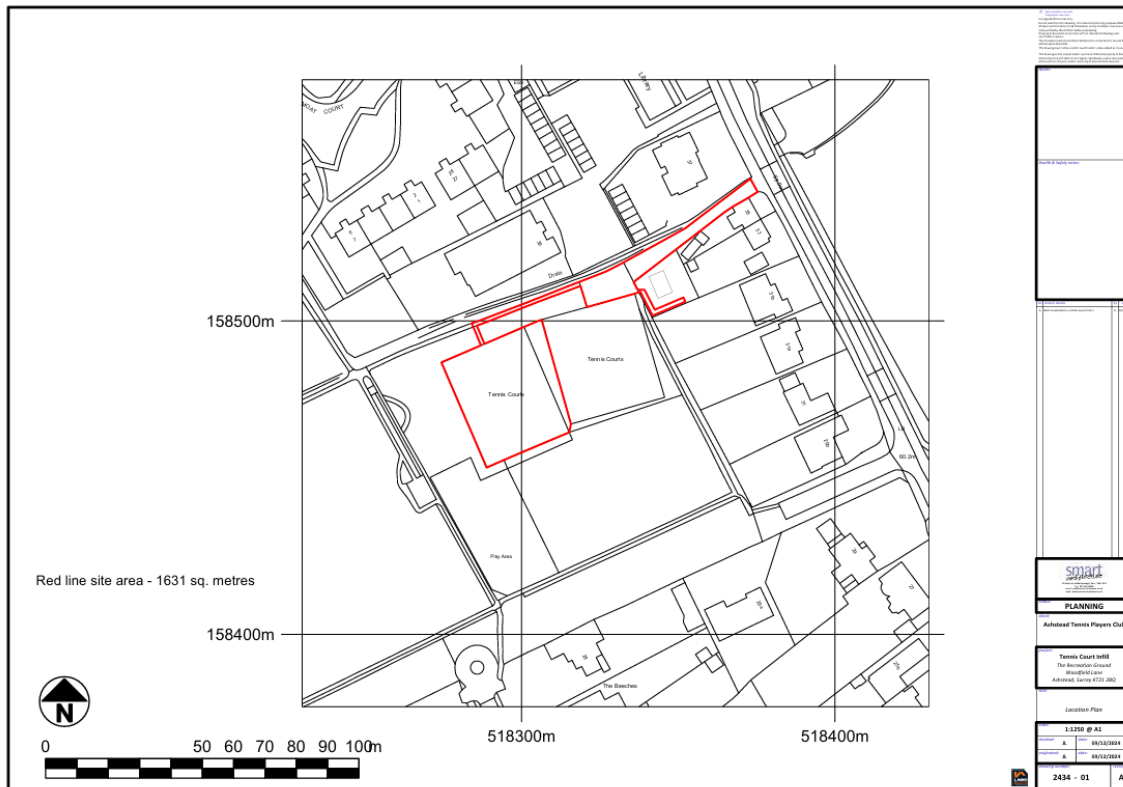
As you appreciate the proposed work involves only resurfacing of tennis courts and the grass strip that exists between the courts and the erection of 2.75 metre high fencing.

Referring to the plan in the application documentation, the redline extends to include the access road as well as one of the tennis courts and the triangular strip that has become the subject of some considerable discussion.

The subject of Net Biodiversity Gain has become quite an issue with this application and up to now the Ashtead Residents Association has not believed it necessary to make representations.

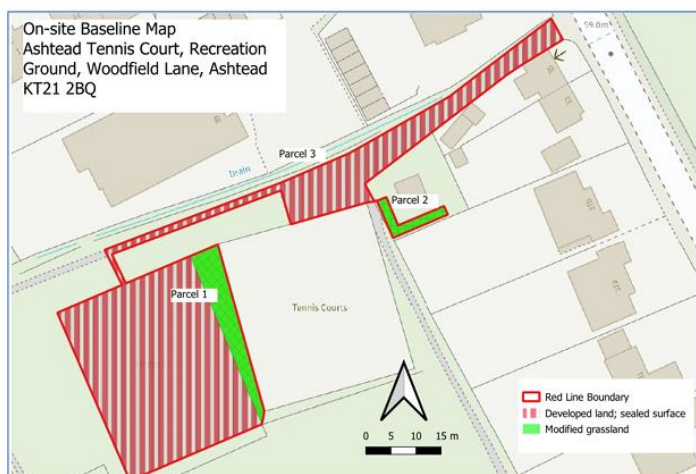
However, having now seen the response provided by the MVDC Senior Ecology Officer in her report dated 4th February 2025, we feel we need to say something to support the club in the hope that a more practical solution can be achieved.

Firstly, the red line plan included by the applicant in the site plan seems to include much more of the MVDC owned land than the tennis club is proposing to work on with this application. Perhaps they should have reduced this to just the affected area.



The area of land that is actually being changed is only the triangular strip of land wedged between the fencing surrounding two tennis courts. According to the applicants BNG report prepared by Eco Assistance Ecology Ltd this land occupies an area of 0.0129 Hectares. The remainder of the land that is leased to the tennis club is not being touched. See the green triangle in the plan below.

Figure 2: Existing habitat map



The MVDC biodiversity policy, Policy EN9: Natural Assets in the Mole Valley Local Plan 2020-2039 was written to address the broad range of projects that Mole Valley was anticipating as the Local planning Authority. As a consequence it is particularly relevant where significant new buildings or major infrastructure is proposed. It would seem unlikely that this Policy was created to deal with such minor works as are proposed at the tennis club.

Having read the report submitted by the applicant and the response by the MVDC Senior Ecology Officer this all seems to have been escalated to a level that may well be beyond the means of Ashtead Tennis Club.

Whilst the tennis Club has endeavoured to meet Policy EN9 as no doubt it was advised it should, we feel some discretion should be applied considering the very small area of land that is to be affected. The current response by MVDC seems to be taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

Ashtead Tennis Club makes use of MVDC owned land and provides a sporting facility enjoyed by many residents, without this Ashtead would be less well off from a sports and leisure perspective. Equally MVDC would have to care for the courts and the small strip of land that exists between the courts. Without the club as a user this would presumably cost MVDC time and money to maintain.

Rather than burden the club with planting trees and 30 year obligations to monitor the biodiversity as stated in the MVDC Senior Ecologists response, quote, “Our monitoring fees are based on the combined size of the habitats to be secured, and their technical difficulty. The significant onsite habitats proposed are classed as Small (up to 10ha) and the highest technical difficulty is Low. Therefore, the monitoring fee will be £6,480. This fee will cover reviewing the monitoring reports on submission years 1, 3, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and scheduled LPA site visits on years 5, 15, 25, 30”, surely a more pragmatic and deliverable solution can be agreed.

This may include the Tennis club agreeing to plant a small hedge alongside the clubhouse or alongside the court fences as per the existing planting. This would be a demonstrable commitment to mitigate the tiny loss of habitats associated with the 0.0129 Hectares of almost unusable and difficult to maintain strip of land.

We would request that the Case Officer considers the minor nature of the work proposed and use a degree of pragmatism in considering whether Policy EN 9 would need to be applied in this situation.

Surely a planning condition could be agreed to encourage some planting but without the liability to the club involving 30 year assessment.

We support the tennis club and would like to see them remain on this site for many years to come.

Yours faithfully


ARA Planning Officer