



Old College Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club

Extraordinary General Meeting

9th May 2021 at 6.30 pm by Video conference

Preliminary

1. Notice of the meeting had been given by email to all members on 25th April.
2. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss plans for development of a new tennis court on the site of the old croquet lawn and to approve the financial commitment of up to 10% above current estimated costs of £153,000.
3. The meeting was Chaired by Alyson Fox, Club Chair
4. The meeting was attended by 44 voting members. Proxy votes had been received from 6 members.
5. Papers providing details of the background, costs and design proposal for a new court were pre-circulated to membership prior to the meeting and posted on the club website.

Background

6. The Chair summarised the background to the project and progress to date:
 - Member Engagement Survey in 2020 had strongly endorsed a new tennis court on the site of the old croquet lawn; 66% said repurposing the croquet lawn to a new court was 'strongly preferred'; 66% said more court availability was top or higher priority; 39% said extending or refurbishing the clubhouse was top/higher priority (vs 37% saying low priority/not important).
 - Court capacity was very limited and demand was high. The club had 620 playing members and was closed to new members since October 2020. Club play sessions, group coaching and teams were all oversubscribed.
 - Over the past 6 months (excluding periods of club closure due to covid lockdown) 7-day court usage was 75-80%, with no difference overall between hard courts and red courts. Courts 1-3 were used equally for individual bookings and allocated bookings (coaching, team practice/matches, club sessions, junior camps), while the red courts were used more for individual bookings than allocations.
 - Bernard Sillwell, a RIBA chartered architect and club member, had produced design options for a new court.
 - Quotes had been obtained from Trevor May and Chiltern Sports, both recommended by Surrey LTA.
 - Plans had been shared and discussed with College Gardens Residents Association. The residents had given support subject to minor conditions.

Design

Bernard Stilwell presented the proposed design. Options had been considered based on LTA minimum dimensions for a doubles court (total playing area). The only feasible option was to 'pair' the new court with court 3. This would: achieve LTA minimum dimensions without going over southern boundary with Lover's Walk or boundaries of courts 6/7; locate the court furthest distance from

College Gardens to lessen impact on residents and reduce risk of planning objections; utilise some of existing floodlight masts on court 3 with cost savings. The surface of the new court would therefore have to be the same as court 3.

Two small trees and bushes within the club boundary at the Lover's Walk end of the space would be removed. A large tree in the south-eastern corner was protected and could not be removed.

This would be a major project involving removal of soil over an area of 600m².

A pre-application meeting had been arranged with Southwark council. Full application submission was planned for June/July 2021 and if approved works would start in Spring 2022.

Finances

Quotes had been obtained from Trevor May and Chiltern Sports. Both estimated £80,000 for the court build, based on asphalt surface for courts 3 and 3A. Total project costs including floodlights, environmental reports, contingency and VAT was £153,144. Having court 3 and 3A as artificial clay would be an additional £35,000 (inc. VAT) – costs from Trevor May.

Jo Cheung presented the 10-year financial forecast. Key points were:

- Income from an additional court was an estimated £14,000 per year.
- The club was in a healthy financial position. At end FY2020 the club had cash reserves of around £190,000. As a non-profit making organisation it must not 'sit' on large reserves and there was a tax liability risk.
- We need to transfer £25-30,000 p.a. to the 'wear and tear' sinking fund for future facilities and court maintenance.
- In recent years the club had spent £190,000 on capital projects (resurfacing, floodlights, fencing). The only capital spend in the forecast was for resurfacing of courts 4/5 in 2022 and remaining courts from 2029.
- The 10-year financial modelling included predicted capex spend, increased income and maintenance costs from a new court, maintenance costs for the clubhouse. Membership income assumed steady numbers and inflation increases only. With these assumptions, the projections indicated that the costs of the new court could be met by club funds. While it would take the club to relatively low cash reserves in 2023 (c. £23k) they quickly recover, and in future years there would be ample funds to maintain the courts and for other capital projects.
- The Committee had considered possible sources of additional funds if required, including: increased membership fees, a one-off 'court levy', crowdfunding, reducing non-essential spend, increasing coach fees/reducing membership subsidy. The LTA would loan only a small amount conditional on making some court time available on a bookable basis to non-members. Sport England loans or grants were not available.
- The Finance Committee had looked carefully at the finances and supported the proposed spend on a new court. The Club Committee recommended supporting the proposed spend.

Discussion

The following comments and questions were made during the open discussion:

- It was noted that the lease expires in 12 years. AF confirmed that the club had approached Dulwich Picture Gallery 2 years ago to discuss an extension but DPG had said it was not a priority at that time. The club would re-approach in coming weeks.

- The accuracy of the grounds survey and volume of soil to be removed was queried. BS confirmed that the design was based on accurate measurements and contractors had been provided with a full topographical levels survey; soil would be removed to a depth of 750mm over 600m², approximating to 50 eight-wheel lorry loads.
- The requirement to have the new court paired with court 3, or that paired courts would require the same surface, was challenged. Other members stated a preference not to have a separate surface for the new court. BS confirmed that pairing would be the only way to fit the court in the available space and achieve LTA minimum requirements. AF responded that the contractors had stated both surfaces would need to be the same; having a low wall divide between the two courts to accommodate different surfaces would not be feasible and potentially be unsafe. The LTA would not provide loans for future development for courts below minimum guidelines.
- A number of members queried the choice of surface, stating that artificial clay was the preferred surface for the majority of members, or that it would be all weather. Others stated a preference for hard courts. AF responded that the Committee did not have data on the preference of surface of members, just anecdotes. Court usage data indicated that all courts were used equally, but there were differences in allocated vs individual bookings between hard and clay.
- It was noted that artificial clay required asphalt to be laid first. Therefore, courts 3 and 3A should be laid as hard and then a decision could be made later whether to lay artificial clay on top.
- Concern was raised regarding the trees at Lover's Walk end of the grounds. It was noted that previous Committee was told that court 3 could not be laid as artificial clay due to leaf fall and moss growth from adjoining trees and shrubs. It was also recommended to survey carefully for underlying water channels and drainage.
- The impact on other courts was queried. AF stated that court 3 would be closed for the duration of the works. All other courts would remain open, but players would be escorted to and from courts by contractor stewards.

Vote

The Chair confirmed that the feasibility of artificial clay would be explored and if feasible, members would be consulted for their preferred surface. Current funds would allow asphalt only.

The members were requested to approve a spend of £153,000 + 10%, the estimated costs for asphalt on courts 3 and 3A.

48 members voted to approve the resolution (including 5 proxy votes). 1 member voted by proxy against. The Chair declared that the resolution was carried.

The meeting ended at 7.40pm.