

Cllr. Birgit Miller, Cllr. Trevor Muten & Cllr. Jacqueline O'Quinn
BH2025/01757 – Tennis Courts, St Anns Well Gardens

11th March 2026:

As ward councillors, we wrote to St Ann's Tennis CiC to recommend that the club should temporarily withdraw its planning application, in order to work with local residents' groups and the Friends of St Ann's Well Gardens towards finding a compromise which is acceptable to all parties. As this recommendation was rejected by the club's leadership, we reluctantly feel forced to object to the planning application.

15th March 2026:

The 3 Goldsmid Ward councillors are writing to object to the following planning application:

BH2025/01757 | *Erection of 15no lighting columns with luminaires to provide floodlighting to 8no tennis courts and erection of 2no single storey storage buildings*

Ward councillors were alerted to this application by residents of a block of flats over the road – on the corner of Nizells Avenue and Somerhill Road – who themselves had only become aware of this application just days before the deadline for online comments. This was disappointing in that the St Anne's Well Tennis Club is a CIC organisation and as such ward councillors and local residents would have expected prior notification of the planning application in order to discuss the Tennis Club plans for a proposed increased use of the courts in the winter months. In the Planning, Design and Access Statement in the application it says:

Consultation and Collaboration

We recognize the importance of working closely with residents, Friends groups, local councillors, and other stakeholders. To ensure a transparent process, we propose:

- *Community consultations to gather feedback and address concerns.*
- *A trial lighting period to assess impact and make necessary adjustments.*
- *Regular updates and an open dialogue with local representatives and park users.*

Sadly, this didn't happen. Only members of the tennis club and the Chair of the board of the Friends of St Anne's Well Gardens were informed of the planning application and as a result the earlier comments on the planning portal are all positive comments from club members with a positive comment from FSAWG on the club's webpage which has since been withdrawn by FSAWG and they have stated a neutral stance. Goldsmid Ward councillors were particularly disappointed not to have been informed or asked to a preliminary meeting regarding the club's plans for an extension of hours especially as ward councillors were so heavily involved in assisting the establishment of a CIC in the first place, a few years ago. There are also 4 social housing blocks in close proximity to the tennis courts who were not asked to any consultations by the tennis club or informed by the tennis club of its application. So, there was no 'community consultation' until it was requested by local councillors and nearby residents who would be affected by noise and potential light overspill.

Eventually there were 2 meetings, one of which was unsuccessful because there was a muddle over times and the other which was well attended. However, no conclusions were reached at these meetings and it was obvious that further discussion was needed with local residents regarding the impact on those who lived adjacent to the courts and those who cared greatly about protecting St Anne's Well Gardens from any encroachments which might have a negative impact on the environment and in particular on various forms of wildlife. Ward councillors have requested that the



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application be withdrawn so further discussions can be held with the local community in order to 'co-design' the changes that are sought by the tennis club. The Tennis club has refused this request.

The main concerns of nearby residents are the lights and the timing of the lights as it is argued that 15 tennis court floodlights will have a negative impact on valuable wildlife habitats and on nearby residents. The City Council has installed bat and wildlife friendly lighting in the park with low energy shielded lights which switch off at 8pm 'to cut out light pollution and protect biodiversity in the park', as stated in Council documentation. Previously Goldsmid ward councillors were heavily involved in the consultation with the environment team about these lights and the time of 8pm was decided on after much discussion and the need to respect the council's planning policy regarding 'Dark Skies'. Plans for high powered tennis floodlights in use until 10pm would therefore appear to clearly be in breach of Council policy and guidelines for the park and will have a damaging impact in terms of inevitable light pollution on both wildlife and human neighbours. The impact on wildlife report put forward as part of the application is fairly limited and doesn't acknowledge the presence of many species of birds, a pond which is actually only a few metres away and ascribes little importance to the fact that the periphery of the tennis courts is a habitat for hedgehogs – a priority species.

The Tennis Club claims in its application that the use of the tennis courts has reduced antisocial behaviour but provides no evidence of this and ward councillors have certainly not seen a reduction in instances of reported ASB and neither have local PCSO's. Indeed, there have been various ASB issues recently which led to the installation of lights, to be turned off at 8pm, at the front of the café in the park.

The local community does recognise the importance of sport and would like to support the tennis club but feel that the concerns of local residents must be listened to as well which is why there needs to be further discussion in the community with all stakeholders to come to a mutually agreed way forward. As the Planning, Design and Access Statement says in its conclusion:

The installation of tennis court lighting at St Ann's Well Gardens presents a unique opportunity to enhance recreational facilities, promote health and well-being, and foster community spirit. With careful planning and community input, we can ensure that these improvements benefit both tennis enthusiasts and the broader neighbourhood while maintaining the park's character and tranquillity.

There is definitely a dissonance here!

Godsmid Ward Councillors ask that the planning committee refuse this application and ask the applicants to bring it back after effective consultation with all stakeholders.