

Proof of Evidence of Chris Warren
Tooting Triangle – Common Land Application
Inquiry

Appellant: London Borough of Wandsworth

Planning Inspectorate Article 14 Ref: COM:3263104
LB Wandsworth Planning Application No. 2019/4206

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 I am Chris Warren. I am a sportsman and businessman. I am the founder and owner/operator of TFC Leisure Ltd which trades as Rocks Lane Multi Sports Centres. Rocks Lane will invest in, host, organise and manage the sports and play facilities at Tooting Triangle.

1.2 I gained a tennis scholarship at Middlesex University in 1982, becoming No1 player at the Centre, winning the National Collegiate championships and reaching the semi-finals of the European Collegiate Games. I have recently become the number 1 padel tennis player over 50 in the UK and have been chosen to represent GB in the Senior World Padel Championships.

1.3 I undertook a 2-year post-graduate course in Management Studies specializing in small business creation at the University of Kingston in 1988.

1.4 I founded our business, TFC Leisure Ltd, in 1989 and this became one of the pioneers of public sector/private sector partnerships.

1.5 Our first partnership was with the London Borough of Wandsworth, managing one of their tennis facilities at Leaders Gardens in Putney.

1.6 We began our business life as tennis providers and have grown into multi-sport providers offering sporting opportunities in tennis, football, netball, padel, cricket and hockey. We have in excess of 10,000 regular players using our public facilities and have a policy of inclusivity where everyone is welcome regardless of ability or economic standing.

1.7 Our company now employs 100 people and manages sports facilities for the London Boroughs of Richmond, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Hounslow. We welcome the opportunity to extend our industry leading approach to the London Borough of Wandsworth.

- 1.8 We are now developing the business further and are becoming a general community activity provider with activity hubs across south and west London. We are also now expanding into new areas including yoga, pilates, boxing, martial arts, personal training, gym, pottery, art, dance and music to complement our community sport offerings.
- 1.9 I have written and reviewed many business plans both when submitting figures from our business to local authorities and from prospective organizations wishing to partner with us or hire our facilities.
- 1.10 This experience puts us in a great position to ensure the success of the enhanced facilities at Tooting Triangle.

2.0 **Tooting Triangle Improvements**

- 2.1 We have been identified as the preferred bidder by the London Borough of Wandsworth to improve, make better and more efficient use of, and generally provide enhanced management of the important sporting and play facilities at Tooting Triangle. We are currently in the process of agreeing heads of terms for an agreement to lease, and a lease that will formalise our role in delivering and managing the proposed facility. The completion of the contract is contingent on the Common Land consent being granted.
- 2.2 The Tooting Triangle buildings are in poor condition and our proposals aim to considerably improve the facilities and fabric of the structure of the buildings so as to offer greater community access to sports and soft/free play activities and to significantly increase the building lifespan.
- 2.3 The buildings themselves will be repaired, modestly extended and efficiently reorganised to provide much improved and more attractive sports and play facilities building on the current offer. This will involve providing improved facilities for the Balham Amateur Boxing Club, significantly improved changing areas, toilets accessible to the general public, enhanced play areas along with a much needed community café. Additional information about the Boxing Club is provided at Appendix 1.
- 2.4 The current sports pitch is underused, predominantly due to the poor condition of the redgra surface which is increasingly difficult to maintain to an acceptable standard due to the difficulty in obtaining the necessary materials and flood lighting is inefficient. The proposed pitches which we will set out on a third generation (3G) artificial grass surface is relatively easy to maintain and provides a safe and durable playing surface that can accommodate heavy and sustained use, and new state of the art efficient lighting will ensure more sporting opportunity whilst reducing the environmental and ecological impact.

- 2.5 The proposals also include the introduction of land drainage which will improve drainage on site.
- 2.6 Overall we are confident that the enhanced facilities will also bring important environmental benefits through careful design and better management.
- 2.7 The proposal will lead to significantly improved public facilities available to the local community without the loss of any existing facilities and without causing any harmful impacts.
- 2.8 The new complex, and associated activities, will be run by Rocks Lane. Our offer and our commitments are set out in the Method Statement tender document (see CD19, some information from the Statement has been redacted for confidentiality purposes). We were chosen for this role because we have a proven track record in the provision of community sporting facilities across south and west London. We would be responsible for management and maintenance and will provide a general manager, duty managers and coaching staff, as well as cleaning staff through our existing established contracts.
- 2.9 If the Common Land Consent is granted, on the basis of the current programme (see appendix 2) it is planned that construction would start on site in September 2022, with the intention to complete construction and open the improved facilities in February 2023.
- 2.10 We would meet with the Boxing Club prior to works starting on site and would seek to minimise disruption of their activities during construction. It's likely that the construction process can be managed to avoid the need for the Club to vacate the property. Although they may wish to vacate for a short period of time to undertake their own internal refurbishment works (subject to any required agreements with the Council).
- 2.11 The tenure of the boxing club is to be agreed with the Council and may be a lease or sublease.

2.12 When not in use (out of hours), the building at Tooting Triangle would be secured and alarms and CCTV will be in place to further enhance security.

3.0 **General Community Benefits**

3.1 Engagement took place prior to the planning application submission, in line with Wandsworth Councils' Sport Playing Pitch Strategy, with local sports clubs and providers. Subject to a successful outcome of the Common Land Inquiry we will continue to engage with the local community to ensure we deliver facilities appropriate for their needs and wishes in order to create a popular sporting and social community hub. We will provide opportunities for free and discounted access to facilities for local residents and run social sessions for all age groups.

3.2 There will be free State School access during school curriculum term time to the outdoor playing pitches. Discounted rates will also be provided to state schools for access to coaches and we will work with LB of Wandsworth, NGB's and Sport England to deliver initiatives to target key inactive participation groups such as previously inactive, 14-25 year olds, female players, ethnic minorities, disability groups (i.e. walking football). We will also introduce a Scholarship Scheme for high achieving juniors to increase their opportunity to access coaching and enable them to reach their potential.

3.3 The Tooting Common sports facilities would be available for all to book via an online booking system. Pricing would be in line with Local Authority pricing.

3.4 The proposed pitches themselves provide flexibility and the provision of:

- 1 Six x small 5-aside football pitches; or
- 2 One x 7-aside football pitch and three 3 x five-aside multi-sport use pitches.

3.5 The toilets will be open to the public in line with the centre's opening hours and they will be regularly monitored and cleaned. Similarly, the café will be open to the public in line with the centre's opening hours.

3.6 The proposed development would also have a number of direct benefits for the Boxing Club including provision of better changing facilities, enhanced layout allowing more efficient use of the existing space and access to café. A longer term lease with the Council would also increase opportunities and likelihood of direct investment by the Boxing Club into improving its training facilities.

4.0 **Tooting Triangle Initiatives specifically for Children**

4.1 We will introduce a number of initiatives for vulnerable children of all ages, all of which have been implemented with great success at our other venues in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the London Borough of Richmond and the London Borough of Hounslow.

4.2 We will devise and implement a community focused Sports/Physical Educational Development Programme. This will be a year round programme for children from 18 months old.

4.3 We will establish a sports and child development programme at Tooting Triangle for many sports including: netball, tennis, football, cricket, uni-hoc, basketball, boxing, martial arts and multi-sport camps. These activities will be available on a stay and play basis and complemented with both indoor and outdoor play opportunities. Parents will have a choice to join organised activities or to play with their child themselves.

4.4 The proposed stay and play facility will be open for an additional period of time (planned for two hours a day, 5 days a week). It will complement and is likely to attract users of the outdoor play area and provide enhanced children's play facilities, its use would be unaffected by inclement weather and has the added benefit of supervision.

4.5 At our existing centres we have established mini multi-sport sessions, arts, crafts, music, yoga, softplay and free play sessions. Children aged between 18 months to 5 years old utilise our sports equipment, playground and pedal bikes and attend sessions in the morning from 10-12 and 1-3 in the afternoon year round.

4.6 Children are charged £2.50 per session for stay and play sessions and children who are identified as vulnerable and economically challenged are offered places on courses and access to facilities free of charge. Our free or

subsidised sessions are part of our 1 in 10 Scheme which was established through our charity The Rocks Lane Sports Trust.

- 4.7 The programme will include both indoor and outdoor provision, creating a sporting/physical activity hub for local children and families with a café with seating (and public toilet facilities) and soft play area creating a community focal point for the local community to socialise.

5.0 **Sports Development in Partnership with Local Authorities and Charities**

5.1 Our Sports Development Programme for 6-21 year olds includes all the sports mentioned above and comprises of playing, learning and competitive opportunities at affordable prices or for free.

5.2 Rocks Lane initiatives for vulnerable children in these age groups has included hosting all state primary schools free of charge and providing the referees free of charge to the Schools Sports Partnerships in the London Borough of Richmond and the LB of Hammersmith and Fulham. Hosting both football, tennis and Netball tournaments throughout the year.

6.0 **Summary**

- 6.1 Rocks Lane will invest up to £712K to create a multi-sports centre which is modern, community focused, affordable, viable, sustainable and fit to provide excellent sporting opportunities for all.
- 6.2 We will adhere to environmental limits and achieve a sports facility for all, by means of a sustainable economy, good management and sound advice. We are passionate about local sports facility development and sports programme delivery and we will endeavour to utilise local personnel and skills for this project to empower community involvement and engagement in the site.
- 6.3 We are proud of our achievements in similar community sites in which we have invested resources and expertise to successfully deliver increased participation, health and well-being, increased employment, sporting education and economic benefits to the local economy and an important and vital social inclusion aspect to our sporting facilities.
- 6.4 Participation is our core value at Rocks Lane and we will never forget the special feeling that players of all ages have when they smile on the court after hitting a forehand over the net for the first time, scoring a goal past their Dad or running on to the pitch in anticipation of having fun! We look forward to spreading the Rocks Lane expertise, professionalism and enthusiasm to Tooting Triangle and maximise its potential as a community sporting hub.

Appendix 1: Balham Boxing Club Statement

Balham Amateur Boxing Club Statement

Balham Amateur Boxing Club was founded by Winston Fuller in 1988.

Winston started the club at the back of his cab office on Cavendish Road.

Talents were found and the club quickly grew, in 1992 the club moved to a bigger premises at the Park Tavern pub, now the Furzedown, in Streatham.

Balham Boxing club continued to thrive but unfortunately after 3 years the Park Tavern it had to close so once again Balham Boxing Club was against the ropes but still fighting.

Winston found a new suitable venue at Hildreth Mews Market, Balham. Here the Club found its feet again and successfully trained boxers for a further 3 years.

In 1998 developers took over the site and

Balham ABC once again had to close its doors.

Before long, in 2008 Balham ABC was back in Balham, on Cavendish Road close to where it all started & where Winston intends to stay. Balham ABC has now been on Cavendish Road in the premises formerly occupied by the Triangle Youth Club, on the Triangle field of Tooting Bec Common 14 years.

Balham Amateur Boxing Club has had many success stories throughout the years both in and out of boxing. Since starting we have had 15 London champions, 6 National champions, 6 national semi-finalist and 3 National quarter finalist. 17 of these were accomplished while in the current premises together with more than 20 outreach projects for many charitable organisations and for those less fortunate. One being for homelessness which

we tackled in Christmas 2020 during the pandemic and continue to help and give to those in need and those who are homeless by giving them food and clothes or just having chat.

Winston Fuller's main aim for setting up Balham Amateur Boxing Club was to help make better citizens using the Club as a tool and safe space for people both young and old to attend. This is proven as all staff at the Club who volunteer are either Ex-Boxers or parents of kids that do or used to attend: also success stories as between them, we have 9 qualified coaches, 4 Qualified judges and 1 qualified referee.

The biggest successes of the Club are those that are not seen.

Appendix 2: Indicative Updated Programme

The below programme updates the programme contained in the Method Statement

Legal	Heads of Terms	
	Contracts signed and sealed	
Planning	Secretary of State Decision	
CONSTRUCTION PHASE (Further Detail in Project Delivery Section 5.3 below)	Pre-Construction Surveys	Environmental Impact Assessment
		Soil Survey
		Electrical & Mechanical
		Clubhouse: Building Fabric / Fixtures and Fittings
	Submission of Building Works Compliance Documents: (Permit to Access, Method Statement, Risk Assessment, Waste Management Plan, Traffic Management Plan)	
	Site Clearance	
	Commence Construction on Site	
Complete Construction Phase		
First annual payments to the Council in accordance with the Concession Contract.		
OPERATIONAL PHASE	Recruitment and Training of Staff (Other Sites)	
	On Site Training of Staff	
	Facilities Open to the Public	