

HAMPSTEAD - GARDEN - SUBURB - TRUST

HGS Heritage Orchard - Supplementary Planning Statement

Application to Barnet Council for change of use, land rear of 6 Willifield Way NW11 7XT

17 July 2026

Contents

1. Summary
2. Site context
3. Site history
4. Existing site
5. 2025 Resident survey
6. Proposal
7. Access/security
8. Policy
9. Conclusion

Appendices

- A. Existing drawing
- B. Proposed drawing
- C. Central Square consultation survey 2025
- D. Materials schedule
- E. Planting schedule and management plan
- F. Biodiversity net gain & feasibility report
- G. Barnet pre-app report

1. Summary

1.1. Proposal: Convert disused tennis court (rear of 6 Willifield Way, NW11 7XT) to heritage orchard

- 1.2. This planning statement accompanies the Trust's application for a change of use to the above site from a disused tennis court (Class F2) to a heritage orchard (Sui Generis).
- 1.3. The proposal follows the Trust's 2025 resident survey for the future of the site and its wider area, where a renewed use as green space was the most favoured option.
- 1.4. The Trust submitted a pre-application request in May 2026 for its preliminary proposal (Barnet ref 26/8203/QCG; case officer Kate Foster; 25 June 2026). The pre-app report states its support for the change of use in principle.
- 1.5. The pre-app report asks for extra information, namely an updated planning statement, further details of planting/materials and a BNG assessment. This information has been provided as part of or appended to the statement.

HGS Heritage Orchard - Supplementary Planning Statement

Application to Barnet Council for change of use, land rear of 6 Willifield Way NW11 7XT

2. Site context



Location plan with site in red

- 2.1. The disused tennis court is owned by the Trust.
- 2.2. The court is situated south-west of Central Square, north of the footpath (Henrietta Barnett Way). It is bordered by the private gardens of 6 and 20 Willifield Way to the west and north; by the garage court to the north-east; and by a 'spinney' of trees (held on a long lease by the Freshwater Group of Companies) to the east.
- 2.3. The land falls away from Central Square to Willifield Way, and the court was cut into a terrace on the slope.

3. Site history

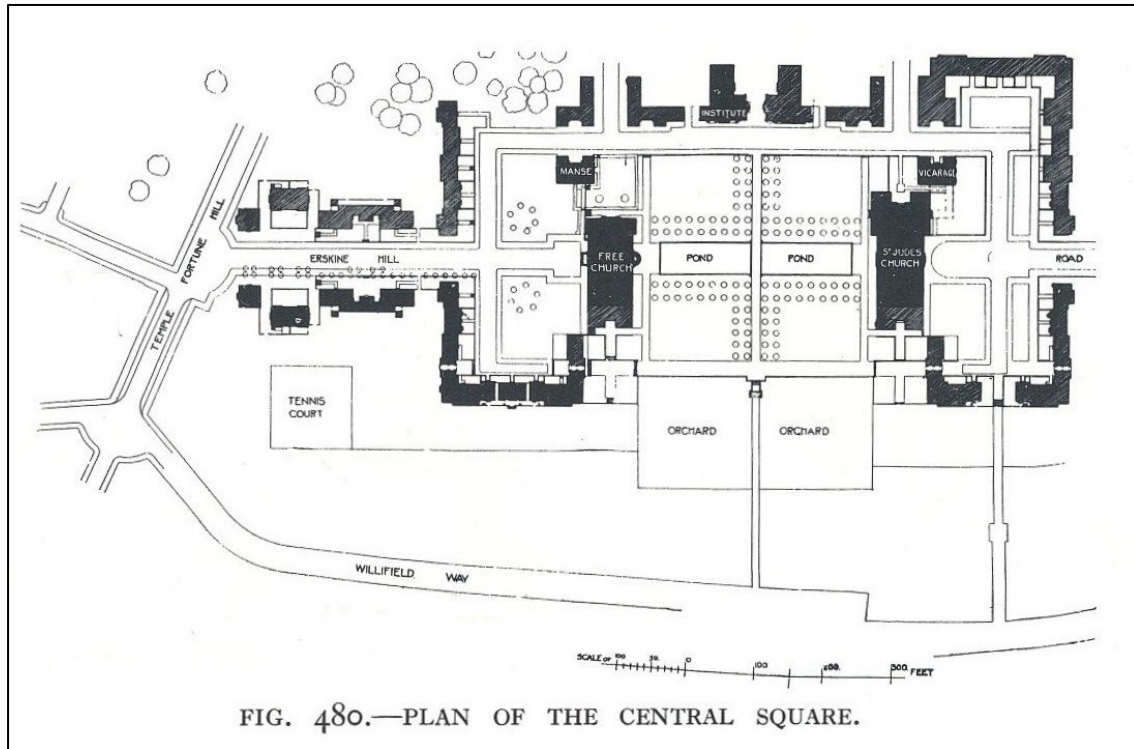
- 3.1. The tennis court, and its wider site, was originally intended to remain open and green, providing a visual contrast to the formal containment of the other three sides of Central Square.

HAMPSTEAD - GARDEN - SUBURB - TRUST

HGS Heritage Orchard - Supplementary Planning Statement

Application to Barnet Council for change of use, land rear of 6 Willifield Way NW11 7XT

3.2. The Lutyens plan of 1913 proposed orchards on the land below Central Square.

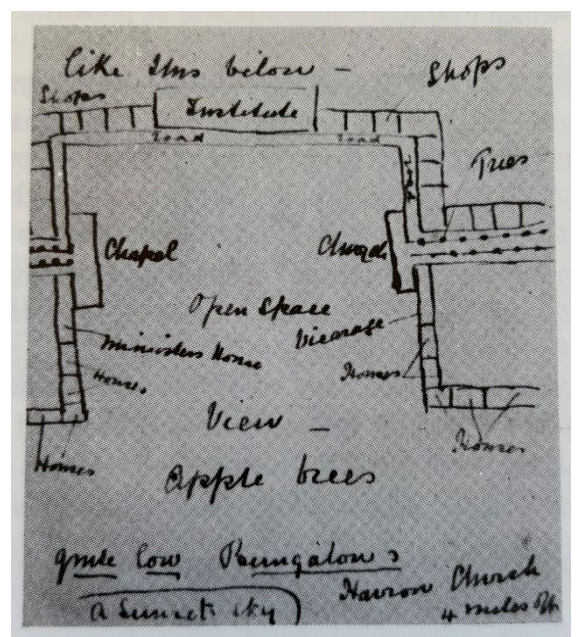


Lutyens plan of Central Square (1913)

3.3. Unwin's 1908 Estate Plan shows an orchard covering this area. In 1908 Henrietta Barnett also provided a sketch of her vision of Central Square while working with Unwin and Lutyens, proposing 'apple trees' in the same location as the 1908 Estate Plan.



Unwin's Estate Plan showing tree rows in centre (1908)



Barnett's sketch showing 'apple trees' (1908)

HGS Heritage Orchard - Supplementary Planning Statement

Application to Barnet Council for change of use, land rear of 6 Willifield Way NW11 7XT

- 3.4. There is evidence this row of orchard trees was planted. A 1924 aerial photo shows the tennis courts had been constructed and tree planting added on the slope above. Four courts were laid out; two on the lower terrace and two on the level of Central Square.



1924 aerial photo showing four courts, with rows of orchard trees on the slope between

- 3.5. The tennis courts continued in use, and for many years the Trust leased the courts to Henrietta Barnett School. Around 2014 they were handed back to Trust, but they were not in good condition. After consulting residents, the Trust decided to pay for the repair of the upper courts, but could not justify such expenditure on the lower ones. In an area that is well served with tennis courts, it was felt that these courts were less viable as the access was poor and further provision of courts was not necessary. Today the upper courts are well used, in good condition and accessible to residents through an online booking system.

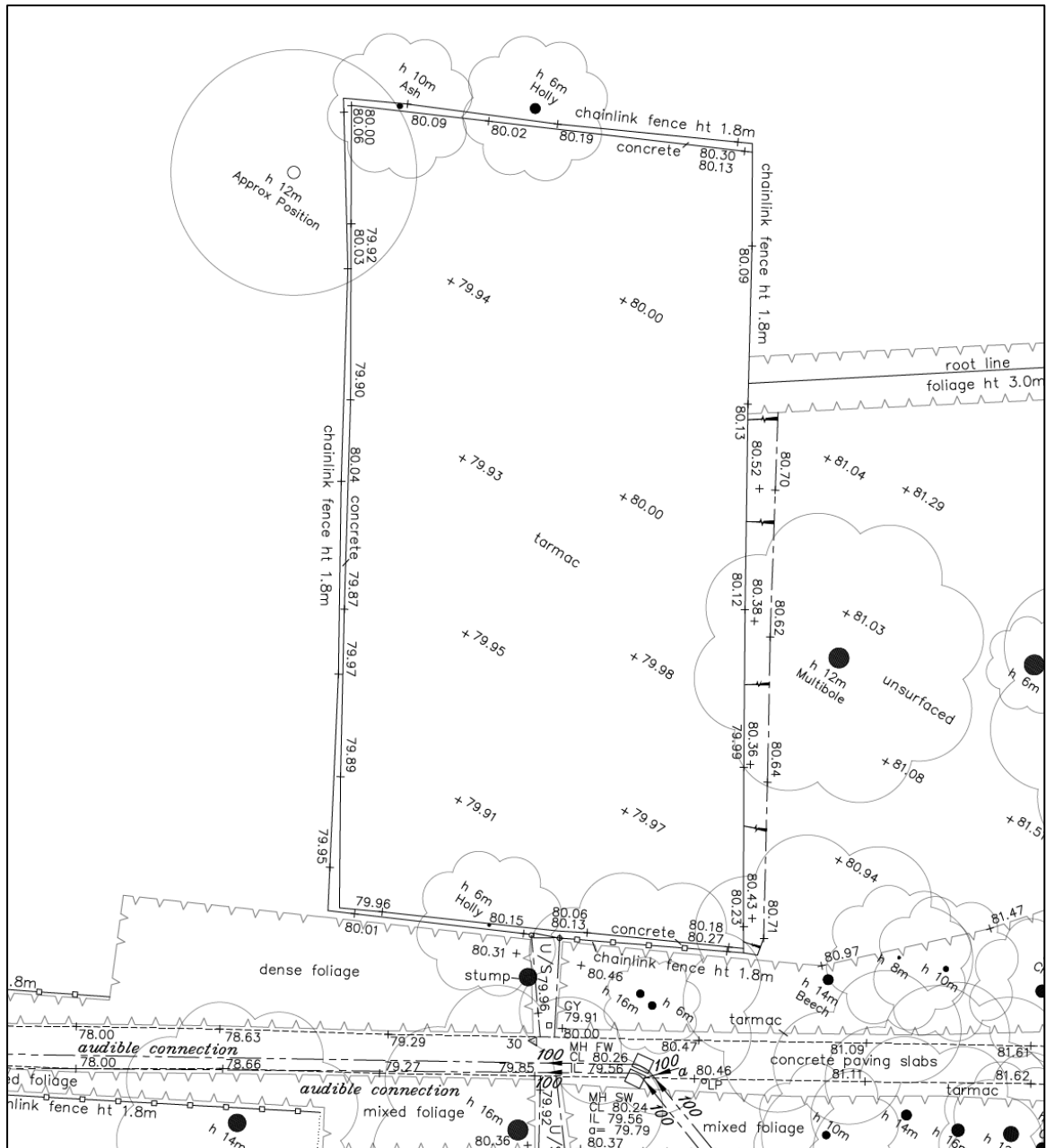
4. Existing site

- 4.1. The existing tennis court is a level site with dimensions of 32 x 16m on plan. It has a 1.8m chain link fence on all sides. It is currently vacant and cleared of vegetation. Trial pits have been dug to establish the existing ground conditions. Some tarmac remains from the former tennis court surface but overall the ground surface is soil with a moderate stone content across the site.

HAMPSTEAD - GARDEN - SUBURB - TRUST

HGS Heritage Orchard - Supplementary Planning Statement

Application to Barnet Council for change of use, land rear of 6 Willifield Way NW11 7XT



Topographical survey drawing TS24-312-1 (May 2024) – see also Appendix A

HAMPSTEAD - GARDEN - SUBURB - TRUST

HGS Heritage Orchard - Supplementary Planning Statement

Application to Barnet Council for change of use, land rear of 6 Willifield Way NW11 7XT



View north (February 2026)



View south (February 2026). The entrance from Henrietta Barnett Way is at the centre of the far hedge

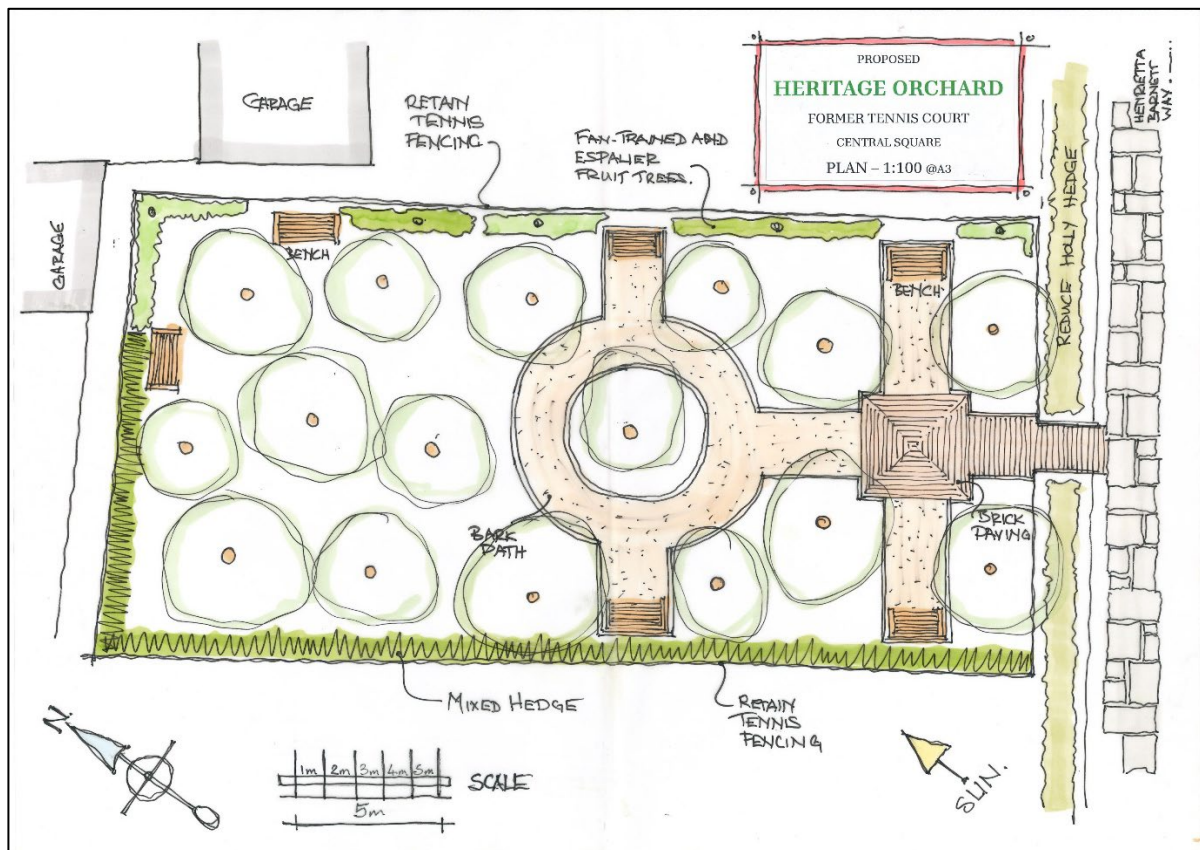
HGS Heritage Orchard - Supplementary Planning Statement

Application to Barnet Council for change of use, land rear of 6 Willifield Way NW11 7XT

5. 2025 Resident survey

- 5.1. The Trust has developed its community orchard proposal in response to the resident survey undertaken September to October 2025, regarding the unused land west of Central Square, which includes the tennis court. Residents were asked to respond to a plan of the space that included references to areas for sports/leisure provision, a children's play area, a café and areas for nature and ecology. See *Appendix C*.
- 5.2. Many survey respondents noted the desirability of enhancing nature in this site over the introduction of more active uses. The Trust decided that an orchard scheme would respond well to the survey feedback. The orchard would not preclude other uses being introduced later, should ideas for the land change or opportunities arise.

6. Proposal



Proposed drawing for HGS Heritage Orchard – see also *Appendix B*

- 6.1. The proposal is for a Heritage Orchard. The 'heritage' aspect relates to the restoration of the orchard that was part of the original drawings for Central Square as outlined above. It also relates to the fact that the planting plan is largely based on heritage species that would have been common at the time of the Suburb's founding in the early 1900s.
- 6.2. The proposed orchard will be planted with a variety of fruit trees. The site will be cleared, the remaining tarmac tennis court surface removed, and the ground prepared for tree planting and species-rich meadow

HGS Heritage Orchard - Supplementary Planning Statement

Application to Barnet Council for change of use, land rear of 6 Willifield Way NW11 7XT

grass seeding. The mesh-fenced boundary treatment will remain as existing, and additional shrub planting will be added on the northern and western boundaries to protect neighbouring gardens.

- 6.3. The planting plan has been designed to reflect 'heritage' tree varieties (apples, pears, plums, quinces, medlars) common when the Suburb was founded in 1907, as well as modern cultivars better adapted to current climactic conditions. The Trust intends to experiment with these older varieties to see how successful they are in the context of a warming climate. When it is established, the orchard will have an educational as well as recreational function. *See Appendix E.*
- 6.4. The orchard trees will bring seasonal colour to the site, encourage biodiversity, and add a new landscape category that is currently missing in the Suburb. It will relate well to the historical importance of productive growing that was encouraged by the Suburb's founders. There will be opportunities to observe the different flowering and fruiting cycles of the various species and cultivars.

7. Usage, access and security

- 7.1. Access to the orchard will be from the existing public path from Willifield Way to Central Square. The high holly hedge to the path boundary will be lowered to enable the orchard to be viewed from the path, helping improve the security of the site and enabling the seasonal changes to be observed.
- 7.2. The HGS Heritage Orchard is a long-term project. It is part of the evolution of a landscape that has been shaped and managed by the Trust for 120 years. We recognise that it will be many years before the new fruit trees and associated planting reaches maturity.
- 7.3. A phased programme of access to the orchard is planned, with the aim of protecting the young plantings as they settle in. The existing tennis court fencing and gate will be retained, allowing the site to be secured. Access will initially only be enabled at arranged times for supervised groups.
- 7.4. After 2 or 3 years, as the trees mature, greater access can be arranged and it is intended that the garden will be open throughout the day. The Trust envisages that it will still be locked at night, but this will depend on how the risks of damage or possible antisocial behaviour are assessed at the time.
- 7.5. The site will be managed by Trust staff and its contract gardeners. This will involve establishment training for the young trees, regular pruning, cropping of the fruit and cutting back the meadow at the appropriate time of year. Signage and interpretation boards will explain the site to visitors, providing horticultural information and illuminating the seasonal changes within the orchard.
- 7.6. In the longer term, it is hoped that residents' groups may help the Trust manage the orchard, encouraging an element of resident ownership of the space. Ongoing maintenance, harvesting the crops and the use of the produce can be shared. The Trust will also draw on its existing relationships with local schools, residents' groups and other community organisations to support horticultural education, share knowledge of biodiversity and host seasonal events such as an Apple Day. The orchard may be of educational interest to local schools at different times of the year.

8. Policy

- 8.1. The proposal will result in the change of use of the site from a disused sports facility (Class F2) to a heritage orchard (Sui Generis).

HGS Heritage Orchard - Supplementary Planning Statement

Application to Barnet Council for change of use, land rear of 6 Willifield Way NW11 7XT

8.2. The relevant policies for the application are outlined in the five sections below (A – E), and are drawn from the following plans or supplementary guidance documents, namely

- London Plan 2021
- Barnet Local Plan 2025
- Hampstead Garden Suburb Character Appraisal (Central Square – Area 1)
- Barnet Playing Pitch Strategy Review 2021/2022 (2023)

(A) Loss of existing sports facility

8.3. The application involves the loss of the existing sports facility (tennis court) for conversion to a different use.

8.4. **Local Plan Policy CHW01 Part B** states, *‘Proposals involving loss of sports and recreational land or facilities will be considered in accordance with London Plan Policy S5’.*

8.5. **London Plan Policy S5 Part C** states, *‘Existing sports and recreational land (including playing fields) and facilities for sports and recreation should be retained unless:*

- 1. An assessment has been undertaken which clearly shows the sports and recreational land or facilities to be surplus to requirements (for the existing or alternative sports and recreational provision) at the local and sub-regional level. Where published, a borough’s assessment of need for sports and recreation facilities should inform this assessment; or*
- 2. The loss from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of the quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- 3. The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.’*

8.6. The Trust believes that criterion 1 applies to this proposal, as there is evidence of adequate supply of tennis courts in the borough of Barnet, including Hampstead Garden Suburb.

8.7. Barnet’s **Playing Pitch Strategy Review 2021/2022 (2023)** details the borough’s supply of tennis courts as currently adequate, stating *‘8.36 – The theoretical observations above suggest that there is no need for additional [tennis] courts to be provided to meet future population needs.’*

8.8. The above statement suggests that the disused site in question may be surplus to requirements. It has been in disrepair and not actively used since 2014. It does not contribute to the existing tennis supply in the borough and is inaccessible to the public.

8.9. The Trust would also note there is adequate tennis provision in the Suburb itself, with 23 tennis courts across five sites managed either by members’ clubs or the Trust. This does not include the many private courts in the area.

8.10. Accordingly the Trust maintains that criterion 1 of the London Plan Policy S5 Part C is relevant in the consideration of this application, as substantiated by Barnet’s Playing Pitch Strategy Review.

(B) Change of use to green space

8.11. The Trust believes the proposed change of use of the disused tennis court to an orchard is likely to be encouraged by Barnet in terms of enhancing green space within the borough.

HGS Heritage Orchard - Supplementary Planning Statement

Application to Barnet Council for change of use, land rear of 6 Willifield Way NW11 7XT

8.12. Barnet's **Local Plan Policy ECC05 Part A** states, '*The Council will work with its partners to improve Barnet's Green Infrastructure by:*

- a) Managing and enhancing open spaces, including Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land to provide improved accessibility;*
- b) Promoting a new Regional Park within the Brent valley and Barnet Plateau Green Grid Area;*
- c) Ensuring positive management of Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and open spaces to provide improvements in overall quality and protection of character and historic significance; and*
- d) Promoting the delivery and use of the sports hubs identified in Policy GSS13.'*

8.13. The Trust notes criteria (a) and (c) may apply in this case. The proposed scheme would provide a new open space containing ecological enhancements compared to the existing land. There would be improved public accessibility to the site when it has fully established as an orchard. The heritage orchard will also contribute to the historic significance of the conservation area (see below section C).

8.14. The Trust believes the benefits of establishing biodiverse and accessible green space outweigh the disadvantage of the loss of the existing disused tennis court.

(C) Impact on character of the area

8.15. The proposed site is located within the Hampstead Garden Suburb conservation area, designated for its historical and architectural significance. The Suburb is recognised in the Greater London Development Plan and the Unitary Development Plan as an 'Area of Special Character of Metropolitan Importance.'

8.16. The Borough of Barnet designated the Suburb as a conservation area in 1968 and the Council maintains an Article 4 Direction over the area. Barnet Council encourages measures that would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

8.17. Separately, the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust exercises control over the planning of the area to fulfil its object to '*maintain and preserve the present character and amenities*' of the Suburb. The Trust does this through exercise of its obligations and rights under the Scheme of Management (for enfranchised properties) and the terms of individual leases (for properties where the Trust retains the freehold reversion).

8.18. Barnet Council and the Trust share a Design Guidance document (2010), published alongside a detailed Character Appraisal of the same year.

8.19. Barnet's **Local Plan Policy CDH08** notes that special attention will be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas when assessing development proposals. Proposals should relate to local historic context and character, including the appearance, scale, mass and height of buildings, use of materials, patterns of development and the layout of buildings and spaces.

8.20. The **Character Appraisal (Central Square – Area 1)** identifies the existing tennis court as one of the '*principal negative features*' of Central Square, being '*derelict and abandoned*'. Contrary to policy CDH08 it does not preserve or enhance the character of the surrounding conservation area.

8.21. As demonstrated in the site history section above, the proposed heritage orchard aligns with various early designs for this side of Central Square. By 1924 four tennis courts had been built, but prior drawings by

HGS Heritage Orchard - Supplementary Planning Statement

Application to Barnet Council for change of use, land rear of 6 Willifield Way NW11 7XT

Lutyens, Unwin and Barnett suggest this land was originally intended to be a larger green space with multiple rows of trees.

8.22. The proposed heritage planting, species-rich meadow grass and hedging are all characteristic of the Suburb. The proposed hard landscaping is minor but would include materials sympathetic to the area, namely brick pavers, bark chippings and plain timber benches as in the Materials Schedule. *See Appendix D.*

8.23. Barnet's pre-app report states, '6.25 - Overall the proposed scheme would provide a significant enhancement in comparison to the existing state of the site, of benefit to the character and appearance of the surrounding conservation area, in accordance with policy CDH08.' The Trust concurs with this assessment, as the proposal is in line with policy CDH08.

(D) Impact on amenity of neighbours

8.24. Barnet's **Local Plan Policy CDH01** states that development should provide for acceptable levels of daylight, sunlight, privacy and outlook for adjoining occupiers. The affected neighbours are the occupiers of 6 and 20 Willifield Way, who back onto the site.

8.25. The Trust does not have concerns that the daylight or sunlight of these neighbours will be impacted. The proposed new hedging will go within the land owned by the Trust alongside a boundary which is already relatively screened with planting. This new hedge will moreover likely improve the outlook and privacy over compared to the existing boundary treatment.

8.26. Compared to the existing abandoned land, there would be an increase in activity and use of the site due to the proposal. However, the Trust feels that as an orchard without site intensification, the amenity harm in terms of noise and disturbance is likely to be minimal. When it was active, the prior tennis court was arguably more harmful in these respects.

8.27. The Trust intends to notify the affected properties of this land, including 6 and 20 Willifield Way, of its plans for the Heritage Orchard and its application to Barnet Council. This will be a formal notification that is sent to affected residents and also posted publicly on the Trust's channels.

(E) Biodiversity

8.28. The importance of ecology, landscape and trees is recognised at every policy level within the planning system: nationally in the **NPPF (Chapter 15)**; regionally in the **London Plan Policy G6**; locally in various policies of Barnet Council's adopted Local Plan. In all cases applicants are required to consider trees and ecology within their proposals.

8.29. Barnet's **Local Plan Policy ECC07** requires that the '*Council will seek the retention and enhancement, or the creation, of biodiversity in development proposals by...ensuring that development makes the fullest contributions to enhancing biodiversity and protects existing site ecology.*'

8.30. The Trust is advised in the Barnet pre-app report (6.34) to provide a baseline Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment, based on a site survey of the disused tennis court. This assessment has been provided by Frank Hawkins, chartered horticulturalist and professional arboriculturalist. *See Appendix F.* The assessment demonstrates the proposal will deliver a significant BNG through the creation and enhancement of habitats on the site.

8.31. *See also Appendix E (Planting schedule and Management Plan).*

HGS Heritage Orchard - Supplementary Planning Statement

Application to Barnet Council for change of use, land rear of 6 Willifield Way NW11 7XT

9. Conclusion

- 9.1. The Trust believes that the change of use of the existing disused tennis court into a heritage orchard would benefit the Suburb through the creation of a biodiverse site with renewed public access and educational, recreational and conservation benefits.