**Oakham Lawn Tennis Club**

**New Clubhouse Proposal**

**Introduction**

For many years, the Oakham Tennis Club clubhouse has not been fit for purpose. Urgent action is required to build a new clubhouse that will allow Oakham Tennis Club to further develop and meet the growing interest of local people who want to play tennis and to extend its use to the wider community. The Clubhouse belongs to the Town Council and so we are seeking the Town Council’s financial support and approval to achieve this.

This document outlines the strengths of Oakham Tennis Club in its bid to obtain various grants, donations, funds from interested parties and specifically Oakham Town Council, its landlords. Its purpose is to provide details about the Club and to create a better understanding of its place in the provision of sport in Rutland. It lays out, our vision, mission and values, our history, what we do, where we are and where we are going. All clubs like ours go through changes where every 20 years or so there may be a need for renewal. This is such a time for being bold and to begin to look forward to the next 20 years at Oakham Tennis Club and beyond.

We look forward to an opportunity to present our case directly to the Town Council to explain our proposal in more detail.

**Vision, Mission, and Values**

**Our Vision** is to continue to grow as a vibrant, progressive, and sustainable tennis club that thrives on providing a full range of enjoyable year-round playing opportunities for both social and competitive tennis. We are committed to extending our role as a key driver of tennis participation across Oakham and Rutland, engaging with schools, other groups, and the wider community.

**Our mission**is to make tennis accessible and enjoyable for everyone in Oakham, and the surrounding areas, regardless of age, ability, or background.

**Our values**arecentral to everything we do. We are committed to:

* Welcoming all ages, abilities, and backgrounds**.**
* Fostering a positive and encouraging atmosphere.
* Providing diverse opportunities for club and social play.
* Offering high-quality coaching and competitive play for skill development.
* Promoting the Club proactively within the community.
* Ensuring financial stability to maintain and enhance our facilities.
* Upholding the highest standards of safety and child protection.
* Maintaining transparency in our communication and administration.

**Our history**

Oakham Tennis Club has a proud history of providing tennis for all ages and has played an important part in promoting a healthy lifestyle for those from as young as 4 to as old as 80+, allowing players of all abilities to take part in regular exercise and outdoor activity. This contributes, as is well-documented, to positive mental well-being. For over a hundred years, it has provided courts for people to play tennis and over that time it has supported society’s changes for inclusiveness bringing access to the game for all including, in its latest initiative, the disabled.

Whilst it is a club for its members, it is the only sports club in Oakham that offers public access to its courts on a pay as you play basis. One of the very few CASCs (Community Amateur Sports Clubs) in the county that does so.

Oakham Tennis Club stands on land left to the people of Oakham in the 1920s, when 2 grass courts were provided. In the 1940s, a third court was added. The club gradually grew on a ‘pay as you play’ basis, organised by the Town Council, until a group of locals offered to run it as an organised club, arranging matches with other established clubs in the area.

By the 1950s there were 3 grass courts in use. However, in 1968 the club was in decline but with the hard work and enthusiasm of some local residents and with the support of the Town Council, the courts were changed to an all-weather surface. The present clubhouse was also updated and improved at this time. However, despite the building being kept in good order and repaired at regular intervals, it should be noted that ongoing attempts to make repairs to this wooden building, which is now over 50 years old, are becoming more expensive and unsatisfactory to support what is otherwise a thriving tennis club community. Furthermore, the building does not meet the more energy efficient regimes of modern times.

In the late 1990s a fourth and much needed court was added to the club’s facilities.

In 2012, the Committee recognised that the introduction of floodlights would prove an undoubted asset to the club and keep pace with developments in other clubs around the region. The application to the Town Council and Rutland County Council was approved and floodlights were installed on 3 courts in 2014.

All 4 courts were re-surfaced in August 2021. Although the courts and clubhouse are still owned by the Town Council, the facilities are kept in good order by a voluntary committee.

The Tennis Club leases the facilities from the Town Council and a new lease has been signed this year giving the Club some security of tenure. This latter point has enabled the Club to move forward but this may need to be reviewed if it limits the ambition of changes outlined in this report.

**Oakham Tennis Club Present Situation**

In this section we outline how we operate, our methods of working, our membership, how we look to improve all members’ playing abilities across all ages and the role we play in Oakham and the surrounding area.

**Management and Governance**

We are a Community Amateur Sports Club and are affiliated to the Lawn Tennis Association. As a consequence, we operate some Club Rules to ensure that the facilities are kept up to standard and that everyone can enjoy their tennis in a safe environment.

As Oakham has grown, the Club has increased in size and stature and the demands of the local community are met by a keen and hardworking voluntary committee of individuals who carry out a variety of roles. The Committee meets as and when it needs to but at least 6 times per year and also reports to the Club’s AGM at which time a committee is elected for the following year. Minutes of all meetings are made available to members. This group of volunteers work tirelessly to ensure that the club runs efficiently and that facilities are maintained to a high standard.

**Safeguarding**

Oakham Lawn Tennis Club acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk.  The Club is committed to ensuring safeguarding procedures reflecting statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complying with best practice and LTA requirements.  A copy of the Club’s full Safeguarding Policy can be found on our website and our Safeguarding Statement is included as **Appendix 1**. We have a designated Welfare Officer who keeps abreast of any developments in this area and keeps the Committee and members well-informed.

**Membership**

As can be seen clearly in the table below, Oakham Tennis Club offers a complete range of membership across all age groups and new members are always welcomed. We should highlight that over 80 members are aged 19 or younger and coupled with the family membership this accounts for over a third of our membership. This compares favourably with other Community Sports Clubs in terms of numbers and age range. Our membership rates are competitive and offer good value for money. Entry for children and young adults can be as little as £20 per annum

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Membership****Categories** |  **2021** | **2022** |  **2023** | **2024** |
| Adult Individual | 80 | 87 | 122 | 116 |
| Adult Joint | 22 | 30 | 32 | 34 |
| Adult Coaching | 1 | 3 | 9 | 7 |
| Family | 9 | 15 | 7 | 11 |
| Student | 2 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Junior U19 | 26 | 35 | 34 | 40 |
| Junior U11 | 25 | 49 | 27 | 43 |
| Parent Player | 4 | 7 | 6 | 11 |
| **TOTAL** | **169** | **231** | **242** | **267** |

**Coaching**

Coaching is one of the most significant strengths of Oakham Tennis Club, reflecting the club's commitment to fostering a love for tennis among players of all ages and abilities. The club offers a robust programme of tennis improvement activities, spearheaded by Head Coach Dan Potter and his team of highly qualified coaches. This dedicated coaching framework ensures that tennis is accessible to everyone, regardless of their skill level or experience. Over the past year, the coaching programme has seen participation from over 300 juniors and 100 adults, with current enrolments at 168 juniors and 62 adults. This impressive engagement underscores the club's effectiveness in promoting the sport.

**Junior Tennis**

The Junior Tennis Programme at Oakham Tennis Club is designed for players aged 4 to 18, catering to various skill levels. Sessions are organized to accommodate complete beginners to those competing at the County level. The club has made significant strides in engaging the local community through school programmes, attracting new players and promoting tennis as a sport that offers social and health benefits. This outreach is not only about increasing membership but also about instilling a lifelong appreciation for sport among young participants.

A standout feature of the Junior Programme is the continuous learning initiative, where older juniors are encouraged to develop their coaching skills through an apprenticeship scheme. This unique opportunity allows them to assist professional coaches while working with younger juniors, paving the way for them to complete their Level One Coaching Award. This initiative also ties into the Duke of Edinburgh volunteering requirements, providing valuable experiences that extend beyond the tennis court.

**Adult Tennis**

The Adult Tennis Programme mirrors the structure of the junior offerings, designed to cater for players of all abilities. With five group coaching sessions each week, alongside private lessons, the programme is thriving, consistently attracting full participation each term. The club is dedicated to integrating new players into the community, providing ample opportunities for them to engage in club sessions and competitions.

There are also 5 mix-in sessions every week which are open to members of all abilities to just come and play in a semi organised framework. There are daytime, evening and weekend sessions available.

In addition, the club organizes ‘keep fit with tennis’ sessions, which combine fitness with tennis skills, thereby enhancing member engagement and promoting overall wellness. These efforts reflect Oakham Tennis Club’s holistic approach to adult participation in sports, ensuring that members not only develop their tennis skills but also enjoy the accompanying health benefits.

**Disability Tennis Initiatives**

In a progressive move, Oakham Tennis Club has begun to introduce sessions specifically designed for players with disabilities, which launched in April 2024. Coaches and volunteers have undergone specialised training through the LTA initiative, Bright Ideas, led by former Davis Cup player Danny Sapsford. This initiative aims to provide tailored coaching for players with disabilities, fostering an inclusive environment that encourages participation in tennis for everyone. This initiative builds on the successful collaborations with local educational institutions, such as the Spires School and Catmose College's Special Needs Unit, highlighting the club's commitment to accessibility and inclusion in sport.

**Competitive Tennis**

Competition is a cornerstone of the Oakham Tennis Club experience, providing members with opportunities to challenge themselves and strive for personal growth. The club organises both internal competitions and matches against other tennis clubs in Leicestershire, supporting players at various regional and national events. The competitive framework encourages players of all ages, from under-8s to over-70s, to participate actively, with 22 teams across both adult and junior categories competing throughout the year. Remarkably, one of the club's players has even achieved national recognition, underscoring the high level of talent nurtured within the club.

**Non-Member Tennis**

Our facilities are also open to the public for non-members to pay and play at any time and contact numbers to book courts and arrange access are available on our website and posted outside the clubhouse. It should be noted that many non-members play throughout the year as tennis is one of the few sports where 2 players can simply turn up and play at their convenience without having to attend an organised activity.

**Financial Considerations**

**Appendix 3** details the Income and Expenditure for the years ending March 31st, 2022, 2023 and 2024 which indicate that as a club, we are financially viable and in a good position to consider major investment in creating a new clubhouse.

In addition, we have recently carried out an internal audit and realised that the sinking fund was underfinanced given the age of the floodlighting and therefore we have addressed this. At the end of July 2024, we have the following account balances:

Current Account £18,211; Sinking Fund £34,245; Savings £17,635 totalling £70,091.

The Current Account includes prepaid subscriptions for the year April 2024 to March 2025.

The prudential consideration of former members, committee members and treasurers has enabled the Tennis club to thrive and prosper. Our large bills of former years - floodlights, new court and total resurfacing of old courts have been able to be met by judicious planning and organising a sinking fund for such events. It should be noted that already our savings account and our sinking fund total in excess of £50K, having paid out nearly £50K for resurfacing of all courts in 2021.

As ever our running costs are increasing. A careful examination of these reveals interesting information. Whilst there are fixed elements such as rent, water, electricity, league fees, some discretionary expenses are seeing increases. The most significant expenses are closely linked to our building and surrounding area and given the age of the building and its current structure, roof repairs, ingress of water and general works are increasing at a rate.

Furthermore, we cannot increase usage of the building because of its poor heating, poor insulation, and its energy efficiency. It is becoming increasingly costly to run and maintain. Over the last three years we have spent a total of £20, 860 on the building, its heating and on the surrounds. As a building it is clearly past its sell by date and does not meet requirements of today’s environmental conditions, let alone suit warm and hospitable welcoming for other visiting teams and members. This limits the building, in its present state, for other organisations and community groups to use and enjoy and thereby reducing opportunities for further income. It is the Clubhouse which is the major consideration for the future.

**The Future**

In considering the future, the Committee have invited Gateley Smithers Purslow to have a look at the clubhouse and we looked at various scenarios with costs on outline options.

In essence, we need to consider with the Town Council what we can do together. The clubhouse is a 50+ year old prefabricated building that is reaching the end of its useful life. It will not meet the government EPC requirements in April 2028. It no longer meets the needs of the tennis club as its internal layout is inappropriate, with changing rooms that are too large and a social area that is too small. There is no disabled WC and its configuration is not well suited to viewing tennis.

We have considered whether it is possible to invest in the existing structure to modernise the building and achieve these aims but we do not believe that it is. Our proposal, therefore, is to replace the clubhouse and we want to explore how we can do this in partnership with the Town Council, whether wholly funded by the Town Council or jointly, with the Tennis Club contributing by way of its own fund raising, grants and loans that might be available. If the latter a longer lease than currently in place might be required.

However, before pursuing these ideas any further, we need to understand the Town Council’s position with regard to developing our clubhouse and their willingness to assist in facilitating grants and funds to provide a building which is modern, economic to maintain and provides easy access for all.

Finally, if there was appetite at the Town Council for a larger investment and some additional land from the car park could be made available, the club would be very interested in offering Padel Tennis to Oakham.

We look forward to initiating a discussion on the contents of this paper in order to shape our next steps and come to a plan for moving forward together and using our energy on what could be realised.

# Appendix 1

# Oakham Lawn Tennis Club - Safeguarding Policy Statement

Oakham Lawn Tennis Club acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk.  The Club is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice and LTA requirements.  A copy of the Club’s full Safeguarding Policy is available on the Club’s website.

The Club’s Safeguarding Policy recognises that the welfare and interests of children and adults at risk are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that regardless of age, ability or disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, socio-economic background, all participants:

* have a positive and enjoyable experience of tennis at Oakham Lawn Tennis Club in a safe and inclusive environment
* are protected from abuse whilst participating in tennis.

Oakham Lawn Tennis Club acknowledges that some children, including disabled children and young people or those from ethnic minority communities, can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and the Club accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

As part of the Club’s Safeguarding Policy Oakham Lawn Tennis Club will:

* promote and prioritise the safety and well-being of children and adults at risk
* ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and adults at risk
* encourage and maintain a culture where people feel able to raise a genuine safeguarding concern and are confident that it will be taken seriously
* ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern
* ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored
* prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals
* ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation

The Club’s Welfare Officer is Lisa Hornsby and she can be contacted on 07900 562478

The Club’s policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved in Oakham Lawn Tennis Club. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed and may result in dismissal/exclusion from the Club.

**Whistleblowing**

Anyone who does not feel comfortable raising a concern with the Club Welfare Officer should contact the LTA Safeguarding Team directly on 020 8487 7000, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.  Further details about whistleblowing can be found in the Club’s Safeguarding Policy.

**Monitoring**

The Club’s Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner in the following circumstances:

* changes in legislation and/or government guidance
* as required by the Local Safeguarding Children Board or LTA
* as a result of any other significant change or event.

**Appendix 2**

The following table details teams across all adult ages and level of competition.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Team | Leicestershire Summer League  | Leicestershire Winter League |
| Ladies 1sts | Premier League | Group 2A |
| Ladies 2nds | Group 2B | Group tbc |
| Ladies 3rds | Group 4B | Group 2A |
| Men 1sts | Group 4B | Group 3A |
| Men 2nds | Group 5B |  |
| Men 3rds | Group 8 |  |
| Ladies over 40 1sts | Group 1 |  |
| Ladies over40 2nds | Group 3 |  |
| Men over 40 | Group 1 |  |
| Ladies over 60 | Group 1 |  |
| Men over 60 | Group 1 |  |
| Mixed | Group 2B |  |

**The Junior section of the club also compete in the Leicestershire County Leagues, with teams of young people ranging from 8-18years. It is encouraging to see so many of our Juniors representing our club so enthusiastically and achieving a high level of success.**

**Appendix 3**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **income** | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
| Members Subs | £19,196.00 | £21,634.00 | £25,696.00 |
| Match Fees | £632.00 | £630.00 | £732.00 |
| Coffee Machine | £236.00 | £75.00 | £0.00 |
| Visitors Fees | £198.00 | £265.00 | £160.00 |
| Sundry Income | £358.00 | £399.00 | £665.00 |
| Interest received | £12.00 | £94.00 | £479.00 |
| Tennis Balls | £0.00 | £366.00 | £205.00 |
| Grants | £8,000.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 |
|   | £28,632.00 | £23,463.00 | £27,937.00 |
| **Total** |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |
| **Expenditure** |   |   |   |
| Rent | £2,492.00 | £952.00 | £1,213.00 |
| Rates & Water | £77.00 | £113.00 | £144.00 |
| Club House Expenses | £1,543.00 | £3,735.00 | £2,413.00 |
| Gardening | £323.00 | £1,756.00 | £3,972.00 |
| Court Maintenance | £49,412.00 | £1,680.00 | £0.00 |
| Administration | £236.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| League Fees LTS Fees | £1,036.00 | £1,210.00 | £1,134.00 |
| Coaching | £145.00 | £0.00 | £296.00 |
| Tennis Balls | £2,059.00 | £1,182.00 | £1,512.00 |
| Electricity | £2,193.00 | £2,495.00 | £2,430.00 |
| Insurance | £384.00 | £540.00 | £889.00 |
| Coffee Machine exp | £524.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Event Costs & Promotion | £1,139.00 | £540.00 | £560.00 |
| Sundry Expenses | £152.00 | £154.00 | £117.00 |
| Accountancy | £150.00 | £150.00 | £150.00 |
| Depreciation | £3,520.00 | £3,520.00 | £2,522.00 |
|   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |
| **Total** | £65,385.00 | £18,027.00 | £17,352.00 |
|   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |
| Excess of Income/Expenditure | -£36,753.00\* | £5,436.00 | £10,585.00 |

\*In the Year 2021 we completely resurfaced all courts which was paid by sinking fund which explains this figure. Refer to Court Maintenance Cost line.