

Statement regarding the Speculation of the Golf Clubhouse Use From Walnutwell Properties Ltd:

We write further to many speculative posts put on Facebook over the past months by members of the local community - either individually, as Save Great Denham Golf Course or by the local Borough Councillor.

We want to set the record straight before our planning application goes in this week.

As supporters of democracy we feel this is important as it will allow the whole community the chance to view our plans in a fair and equitable manner.

We respect the right for others to speak out against our plans and always take on board genuine comments made in the appropriate manner, by people who leave their name. To the small minority that have made a number of personal comments, based solely on guess work and the desire to be vindictive, we even appreciate your right to protest, but feel sorry that you want to remain nameless.

Given we have voluntarily come forward to give you the truth about the matter, we respectfully ask that speculation around us and our interests ceases immediately, and everyone can debate fact not fiction.

So here is the truth of the matter:

In August 2020 we were alerted to the demise of the Golf Club via a Facebook page. As we were completely unaware of any of the details, we were very surprised and saddened to read the news.

On the 10th August, Mr Weir posted two letters on a Facebook page showing a letter he received from Bidwells and his reply. In this letter he wrote a few paragraphs about a 'change of use' and we have extracted some of the content:

So, your plan of alternative uses would appear to be based on a change of use of the buildings on the site whilst, at present, leaving the open space of the golf course for pastureland. The Use Class system allows a change of use from D2 to a state funded school or registered nursery subject to prior approval, which is why I believe you have plucked that option out of the air.

It was this post that first alerted us to the possibility of the clubhouse becoming vacant.

On the 11th August we received a telephone call from someone who lives very close to the Golf Course. They were seeking our professional opinion on the rent that a nursery would pay for a building of the size of the clubhouse. Whilst the conversation was private, we are prepared to confirm we gave a figure that evidently made the case, that the Landowners could indeed expect more income from this route, than they were then achieving.

With these two events happening together, it became obvious that there was, in all probability, an opportunity to make something positive out of a difficult situation.

After careful consideration we then used the letters Mr Weir had posted on Facebook to find the contact for the agent and we contacted Bidwells to see if we could discuss the opportunity that may arise.

A few days later it was arranged for us to look over the clubhouse to see if it could be used as a nursery and on the 20th August we wrote to the current operators and agreed a visit.

At our visit to look around the property we met with the Golf Club operators and made clear to them we would not proceed if they thought our actions would be the final demise of the golf club. We were reassured by them that it was too late to save their operating the site as a golfclub. We openly discussed with them our plans and even the idea of the future name of the trading company should we proceed.

We would like to place on record the total professionalism of the golf club operators and their understanding of our new involvement. We are truly sorry that the Golf Club closed.

Our visit allowed us draw up plans for the project and importantly give us the chance to assess the size of capital injection required to convert the building into an outstanding nursery setting.

We have also held detailed discussion with both Parish Councils on the 28th October. In this meeting we discussed our project, on a Private & Confidential Basis, which remains. We are waiting for feedback from both Parishes we hope before we submit planning this week, to see if they have any minor alterations, they would like us to include. To be clear they have not provided us with any opinions for or against, apart from making clear the need to maintain the Urban Gap and green spaces, something we have no control over.

We have secured with The Trust, via Bidwells a legal commitment for us to try and obtain planning permission and then operate the nursery.

As part of our process we also wanted to assess client demand for another nursery in Great Denham, to give parents a choice between operator's styles. This was carried out recently with the advert on the Great Denham Community Facebook Page.

We were genuinely upset that the advert was viewed by some as insensitive or presumptuous in anyway. As part of the planning process it is good to prove a need and therefore, we wanted to assess the interest from the local community for another nursery if it were to open in Summer 2021. **We are very aware of the hurdles in front of us.**

It also seems the name has caused some concerns, again we would like to apologise, if people have misread our intention. It is important for us that the nursery reflects the community in which it is situated. Much has been said by the local community about Great Denham being a "Golf village" and the local street names being famous golf courses. It was therefore a natural choice to take this heritage forward in a name for the nursery. The operating name 'Little Putters' was mentioned in both our meeting with the golf club operators and in the meeting with the Parishes and at no point were we made to feel it inappropriate. However, if the wider community feel strongly that the name is wrong, we will of course consider changing the trading style name.

Your Decision

We are going to proceed with a planning application where, on your behalf the two Borough Councillors and two Parish Councils will have their say.

Even if we are successful with the granting of planning, we still need to consider:

1. it will be a major investment to turn a building used for adults into an Outstanding setting for a children's nursery. The community's support would be welcome.
2. the animosity towards us for simply trying to take a building, that will be boarded up or demolished, to provide a business to serve the local community. Will this animosity & abuse stop?

With the hospitality sector in dire straights and little other use allowed for the clubhouse in the D2 category except: cinemas, concert & dance halls, bingo halls, public swimming pools, ice rinks or gyms or sports courts; In the spirit of our openness please consider and by all means tell us:

- 1 *Would you like to see the building used for another nursery in Great Denham? (of course, for many of you, you may not have young children... that, we understand, but still what do you think?)*
- 2 *The clubhouse will not be used for a golfclub, with this fact; would you like to see the boarded up and the risk that anti-social behaviour increases further?*
- 3 *Would it serve the community better to have the building demolished?*

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the vast majority of those who have contacted us for their positive comments.

If you would like to join the group of interested families or would like to support our venture, please email using the address below.

Chris & Jackie Townson

Directors – Walnutwell Properties Ltd / Trading As Little Putters Day Nursery

Email: littleputters@outlook.com