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**Proposed new gate posts & wing walls, Rochester & Cobham Park Golf Club,
Park Pale, Rochester, Kent, ME2 3UL**

Planning Statement

Introduction

This statement is part of a planning submission to erect a set of gate posts and wing walls at Rochester & Cobham Park Golf Club. They would be erected on both sides of an existing set of gates which are located on the private driveway leading from Pale Park Lane to the clubhouse and car park.

Rochester & Cobham Park Golf Club was founded in 1891. Originally known as Rochester Golf Club, it was first established as a 9-hole course at Oakleigh Farm Higham and moved to the Deer Park at Cobham Hall after the First World War in 1920 when the 8th Earl of Darnley offered a lease to the Club.

An 18-hole course was laid out and remained this way until the construction of the HS1 Channel Tunnel rail link on the boundary with the A2/M2 resulted in the relocation of the Clubhouse and the remodelling of the Golf Course by the renowned golf course designer, Donald Steel.

The Golf Course is a parkland type 18-hole course currently measuring 6,597 yards from the back tees and playing to a par of 71.

The Golf Club is one of the 15 Regional Qualifying venues for The 153rd Open, at Royal Portrush in 2025. This is indicative of the quality of both the layout and the course conditions at the Club.

The existing gates are a pair of decorative steel gates which are hung on square section steel gate posts. They are electrically operated by keypads set in pedestal housings on both sides of the gates. The housings also incorporate intercoms. The gates have a width of 4 metres excluding the gate posts. They have a minimum height of 2.1 metres at each end which rises to 2.6 metres at the meeting stiles. A control panel is contained within a painted box which is attached to one of the gate posts. A 2 metre high V Mesh security fence links to both gate posts.



Figure 1: View of the existing entrance gates in the open position.

Whilst the existing gates and the security fence are functional and provide the required amount of security for the Club, my clients feel that their setting could be improved to reflect the status of the Club and its high ranking amongst other Golf Clubs in the UK (*figures 1 & 2*).



Figure 2: View of the existing entrance gates in the closed position

Location

The Rochester and Cobham Park Golf Course is located at Park Pale on the south side of the A2 trunk road at Cobham. It is accessed from Brewers Road, Shorne, via Pale Park Lane and a bridge over the A2. It forms a section of the historic Cobham Park. The Park was largely landscaped by the notable landscape gardener Humphry Repton during the latter part of the 18th Century.

The site is situated within the Metropolitan Green Belt and the Kent Downs National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). The landscape of the Golf Course in the former grounds of Cobham Hall and which also contains *Repton's Seat*, is of high historic importance.

The present Clubhouse was opened in 1997. It has a main two-storey element with a plain tiled Kentish hipped roof and brick exterior and timber windows with a linked building used as a club pro shop and which contains a small clock tower. There are parking areas to the east of the building and the course lies principally to the west of the building.

The existing gates are located on the private driveway which leads from Pale Park Lane to the Clubhouse and car park. They lie well within the site, just beyond the access road to the Golf Club's maintenance compound. The driveway as laid out, was approved by Gravesham Borough Council on 20 August 1996 under reference 19960483 pursuant to condition (i) of outline planning permission reference number 19940777, which itself was approved on 26 July 1995. It was then known as the revised northern access road.

Restrictions were placed on the Club's planting scheme at the time of the re-ordering. A condition of the planning permission required the Club to return the parkland to Humphry Repton's original concept of only featuring indigenous hardwood trees there. The Park consequently, now features some of the Country's finest specimens of beech, chestnut and hornbeam trees as well as several veteran oaks, one of which is believed to be over 600 years old.

The Proposal

The proposal retains the existing gates and steel gate posts. The gates are currently painted black. They will be embellished with gilding to pick out the decorative elements including the fleur-de-lis finials and the escutcheons.

Handmade red rubber brick posts with cast stone dressings and short wing walls will be built to each side of the existing gates and these are the subject of this planning application.

The new posts will be similar in appearance to the posts at number 5 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea which date from 1718 (*figure 3*), but they will be approximately 600mm lower in height in order that they relate in scale to the existing gates (*figure 4*). These posts appear in a number of architectural publications as outstanding examples of early 18th Century gate architecture.



Figure 3: Gates at 5 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea



Figure 4: Proposed gate posts & wing walls

The materials used in the proposal will complement those at Cobham Hall which is also built of red brick with stone dressings (*figure 5*).



Figure 5: Cobham Hall from the air

The new posts will be constructed of handmade red rubber bricks as manufactured by WT Lamb & Sons Ltd of Billingshurst, West Sussex with red engineering bricks at the bases to two courses above ground level. The engineering bricks will function as a damp proof course. The Lamb's bricks are made of a brick earth that has been in use for the past 300 years or more, predominately in London and the South East of England. Their distinctive bricks and rubbers have been used on iconic buildings, including Hampton Court Palace, Westminster Cathedral, Kensington Palace, and the award winning Hans Place project.

Acorn finials made of cast stone will be placed on top of the gate posts to celebrate the ancient oaks in the Humphry Repton landscape. The cast stone used for these as well as the dressings will resemble Portland Stone.

A bas-relief plaque made of Portland Stone will be placed within the recess of one of the gate posts depicting the coat of arms of the Club. A corresponding plaque will be placed within the recess of the other gate post with incised lettering depicting the name of the Club.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The footprint of the proposal will measure under 4m². This proposal is therefore, exempt from the planning requirement to submit proposals for Biodiversity Net Gain as it qualifies as a *de minimis* exemption under Section 4 of The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 which states: -

4.—

(1) The biodiversity gain planning condition does not apply in relation to planning permission for development which meets the first and second conditions.

(2) The first condition is that the development does not impact an onsite priority habitat.

(3) The second condition is that the development impacts—

(a) less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value(1) greater than zero; and

(b) less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat.

My clients nevertheless propose to plant native species beech hedging to both sides of the approaches to the gates

Conclusion

The proposed gate posts and wing walls will be built on the existing grass verges to each side of the existing gates. No existing trees or hedgerows will be affected by the proposal.

The proposed gate posts and wing walls will be constructed from high quality materials similar to those used at Cobham Hall and their style be complementary to both Cobham Hall and the Humphry Repton Landscape.

The proposed gate posts and wing walls will create an appropriate setting for a Golf Club which is amongst the premier clubs in the United Kingdom as demonstrated by its status as one of only 15 such Clubs which are the 15 Regional Qualifying venues for The 153rd Open, at Royal Portrush in 2025.

The proposed gate posts and wing walls will be of a design that is appropriate to a heritage setting in the Metropolitan Green Belt and the Kent Downs National Landscape.

I respectfully request that Full Planning Permission be granted for this application.

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