



EXETER (SUMMERWAY) JUNIOR LAWN TENNIS CLUB

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(The DCC CSDO)
County Sports Development Officer
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Dear *(DCC CSDO)*

Thank you for the time you shared with me on site at the Exeter (Summerway) Junior LTC a fortnight ago. I found it most helpful in clarifying my thoughts on a number of aspects regarding the possible expansion of the facilities should the schools' merger go ahead.

As you will have gathered, while I enjoy many facets of the game, I am not a tennis fanatic. My continued involvement after my daughter's nine years with the Club has far broader and more altruistic motivations, and my concern is for the local community as well as for the children and families which form the Club itself. I view the tennis as an excellent vehicle for use in character building and the healthy physical development of the youngsters, giving them strong guidance towards becoming good citizens. For such a small Club, Summerway has produced more than its fair share of high flyers. These are but a tiny part of its contribution to the game and to the community, however, as many hundreds of other playing members have passed through and received substantial benefit from this gem amongst the County's sporting assets.

It is these broader issues which currently place a heavy responsibility upon our shoulders as the locality faces possible change. If those of us who are most involved get it wrong, immense damage to the local neighbourhood could result, and a priceless opportunity to provide for our children be lost for the foreseeable future. My present determination to work for the expansion of the Club derives from the considered conviction that this is the right way forward for everybody concerned, and it is not driven by any selfish desire to put the interests of the Club before those of the wider community. It is my opinion at this moment in time that the interests of both neighbourhood and Club concur.

There needs to be an awareness of a danger accompanying the discussion of enlargement. It may well be that the Club would be damaged by an adverse decision regarding expansion unless there are very cogent reasons for it. The Committee and the membership are expressing great enthusiasm for the plans and ideas which I am presenting in this letter, and a disappointment based on a seemingly arbitrary rejection might greatly weaken the voluntary support upon which Summerway depends, besides possibly causing a furore of anger that will please nobody.

It is also very important to stress that the Club has been seriously over-stretched in providing for its current membership on just two courts in recent years. At no stage in the considerations must this be forgotten. The principal necessity is to relieve the limiting and damaging pressure caused by the lack of courts at those times when the demand for play is sky high. Certainly we wish to expand our playing membership if these plans come to fruition, but there is no possibility whatever of the Club expanding its membership *pro rata* with the number of additional courts. We must all remember that this is the real world, and the Club will only work if the provision is attractive and affordable to the great majority of families within the community who would like their children to play the game of Tennis, and if it is manageable by the voluntary administration which has shown its worth for nearly three decades.

I will now list a miscellany of points, some referring to the enclosed diagram, which may be helpful material in the production of a development plan, and which may also give some idea of our vision for the future of the Summerway Club. These are numbered for ease of reference only, and do not indicate priority.

1. Objects of the Proposed Expansion

- a) to allow more than one activity to take place at any given time
- b) to ease overcrowding and improve safety during group coaching
- c) to cope more adequately with the large number of beginners
- d) to provide a more feasible base for the administration of tournaments
- e) to enable an increase in membership
- f) to develop links with eleven or more middle schools
- g) to make facilities available to those middle schools in school hours
- h) to add facilities suitable for any potential disabled playing member
- i) to make possible some evening activities from October to March
- j) to add a practice wall facility
- k) to provide a shower and extend changing facilities
- l) to provide secure overnight accommodation for equipment at times
- m) to provide additional shelter from wind and rain during showers
- n) to ease court availability for the Club's internal Singles competition
- o) to provide Tennis for still more families normally excluded by cost
- p) to make provision for parking facilities
- q) to provide incentive for voluntary group coaches
- r) to enable playing members to maintain a coaching link beyond age 18
- s) to provide incentive for the Committee and group coaching assistants

- t) to encourage suitable members to consider a coaching qualification
- u) to allow home friendly matches to be arranged without major disruption

2. Corresponding Notes Underlying and Amplifying the Objects

- a) The Club caters for a variety of activities, some of which preclude all others when they occur. Typical examples are the home fixtures for the teams competing in divisions of the East Devon Lawn Tennis League, group coaching, and the summer and winter sessions. These make it impossible for the day to day practice, individually arranged box matches, home matches in postal competitions, individual coaching, recreational play, and all the rest to take place. With only two courts at our disposal, all normal activity frequently grinds to a halt with the great majority of the playing members excluded. This needs to be rectified.
- b) The Club is streamed into four grades from 1 to 4 according to ability, irrespective of gender, with the beginners' group being by far the largest. The beginners are therefore split into two sub-groups, 4A and 4B, meeting on different evenings. There have been occasions when twenty or more have turned up for a group coaching session, much to the discomfort of the coach, who naturally considers such a large number to compromise safety, even with extra pairs of parental eyes on court. These groups need more court space.
- c) The **Double Gates** shown on the diagram between **Courts 1 & 2** and **Courts 3 & 4** either slide (preferred) or wheel open to yield a central gap of between twenty and thirty feet, preferably the latter. These would remain closed and padlocked at all times with the exception of the beginners' group coaching, possibly that of Grade 3, on occasions during Summer/Winter sessions, and maybe middle school use, when they would be opened, or partially opened, to give the coach a central position from which to control the activity on all four courts with the help of parents or other assistants. The gates would not be available for normal **Courts 3 & 4** access, and would not be opened if there was any possibility of balls passing through the gap at even moderate speed. The gap would be the natural point to which the coach would call players from all four courts in order to explain technique or the next activity, and would only be used with discretion, safety being foremost in mind.
- d) Exeter has a big problem with courts for significant tournaments. The difficulty lies not in the total number of courts within and around the City, but in their dispersal. The Club hosts annually a substantial LTA officially sanctioned junior tournament each autumn half-term, with over one hundred and forty competitors playing up to three events each. The 1998 Exeter Summerway Open Junior Tennis Tournament used courts in eight locations, and finding supervisors for so many venues was both a nightmare and an inefficient use of their time. Also, our two courts and limited accommodation is not really sufficient from which to run so large and prestigious an undertaking. When we consider that the Torbay Open

has no less than twenty-three courts in two locations within easy walking distance of each other

- e) The high demand for membership of Summerway means that the Club cannot advertise and promote itself, as every place is filled by personal recommendation very early in the season. The Club is active morning, afternoon and evening each Saturday and Sunday, and each weekday evening, from early April to late September, and the limit of eighty-five playing memberships which include free group coaching is really too high considering court availability and the size of the coaching groups. If membership rose too much, adverse effects from the burden on coaches and from damage to the ethos that drives the Club so successfully would defeat the object of enlarging the provision. Taking everything into consideration, if the Club facilities are expanded in line with the ideas in this letter and the enclosed diagram, the playing membership could be increased to perhaps one hundred and sixty to everyone's advantage.
- f) While LTA policy is to promote links between tennis clubs and secondary schools with their feeders, this is not suitable for a juniors only club like Summerway. Effective links between club and school need to be at middle school level in this case. Most of the City's high schools have some tennis facilities, but I cannot think of any local middle school having anything specific. By the time youngsters have progressed from middle school at age 12 not having sampled the game properly, it is too late to expect tennis to become their major sporting interest, even if it is the game to which they are most suited. For this reason, the Club would like to extend the use of its facilities during school hours from just Summerway Middle School to at least ten other middle schools which come immediately to mind. Unless the schools are within easy walking distance, they are unlikely to make use of the Club's facilities on a frequent basis, but it would be a tremendous asset for the others to be able to plan the occasional trip to make the children aware of the possibilities of playing tennis. The increased membership would almost certainly derive from these middle school links.
- g) The Club would envisage that interested schools would hold a set of relevant keys and have access to Courts 1 to 4, U/D Loo, Shower & Chg. Room and the Half-Court with Practice Wall. It would be necessary to establish a system acceptable to both Club and schools to govern these links and the use of the facilities. Being a retired schoolmaster, I would almost certainly be prepared to run an inter-school competition occasionally in the form of one of my fun "timed tournaments" using my laptop, which could involve (say) sixty children on each occasion.
- h) The Summerway Club was not designed with the disabled in mind, and there are physical characteristics such as steps, narrow gates and inadequate access to the loos in the clubhouse which would make it most difficult to cope with a disabled child wishing to play wheelchair tennis. While not marked on the diagram, it is envisaged that there would be

hard and level access to the *Half-Court with Practice Wall* and *Courts 5 & 6* through *Gates C, E & F*. All gates on the diagram would have a minimum width of four feet. In addition, there would also be a *U/D Loo* (Unisex, Disabled Loo) in the proposed new block. These improvements will ensure that a disabled child and even a disabled coach could be accommodated at the Club, as well as providing toilet facilities for any disabled parents and spectators.

- i) While not shown on the diagram, it is hoped that at least two courts, preferably *Courts 5 & 6*, will have floodlights. These courts have the disadvantage of being closer to housing, but there is some screening by trees and hedges, and the courts would be on a lower level than the other four, which is in their favour. We appreciate that lighting will require expert advice and sensitive planning permission. The difference that some lighting would make is enormous. At present, the Club can only function at weekends and holidays for half the year from October to March. We would not require permission to use the lighting beyond 21:30hr as an absolute deadline each evening, and would write 21:00hr in the Club Rules to ensure any slight overrun never transgresses that absolute deadline. Attention will have to be given to a suitable method to control the use of the floodlighting. Lights on two courts would greatly enhance the desirability of the Club to the more serious part of the membership which plays competitions and tournaments, and currently experiences difficulty obtaining mid-week practice.
- j) A practice wall would add another dimension to the Club's facilities. It would have such uses as an aid for the coaches, for warm-up, for individuals to practise and develop their technique, and as a convenient occupation for a single player waiting for a playing partner to arrive. The wall would need to be sufficiently substantial to ensure noise pollution is kept to a minimum. The use of the *Half-Court with Practice Wall* would be restricted in the Club Rules to not later than (say) 20:30hr out of consideration for the Club's residential neighbours. The practice wall would have supports behind it to take movable seating facing the end of *Court 5* for the use of spectators on special occasions.
- k) The clubhouse consists of one room with doors at each end giving access to two small cloakroom-cum-changing areas, one for boys and one for girls, each having a small closet with lavatory and wash-basin. There are no showering facilities on the premises at the moment. The addition of the *Shower & Chg. Room* in the new block would extend the changing area and make possible the taking of a shower, which would be particularly helpful when the Club hosts a tournament or has home fixtures and entertains visitors. Some thought will need to be given to the control of shower use as both water and electricity are metered, and the cost of these would not be insignificant.
- l) Another major consideration is the lack of security overnight, which means that the vast amount of equipment needed for a tournament has to be loaded each morning into a vehicle, unloaded and set up at the Club,

re-loaded into the vehicle at the end of play, and unloaded at the referee's home each and every day. With all his other responsibilities, it is no wonder the referee has averaged only seven or eight hours sleep per tournament week in recent years. This situation is unsustainable, and the **Secure Office** shown on the diagram, built like a fort with metal shutters, would be designed as the referee's office where equipment can be left in complete safety from one day to the next. This office would fulfil other purposes during the year, especially as a relief to the clubhouse when it is oversubscribed.

- m) The new building comprising the **Secure Office**, **U/D Loo** and the **Shower & Chg. Room** would have a six feet wide paved surround covered by transparent roofing similar to that used for carports. This would give shelter from driving rain and sudden showers when the Club is in heavy use. The only other shelter on the premises is the clubhouse, the verandah of which is always available whether or not the clubhouse itself is open.
- n) The Club is extremely active in promoting singles play in spite of court limitations. In particular, an internal league of divisions consisting of four members each is organised. Participants play matches of one tie-break set over five three or four week periods, spanning much of the summer season, with promotion and demotion of competitors following each period. This gives each player fifteen one set matches each year. Over 65% of the membership elected to compete in the league in 1998 which, given that absolute beginners are not ready for such an event, is a measure of the huge success the Club enjoys in encouraging singles. The Achilles' heel is once more the lack of courts, with youngsters waiting as long as two hours to play, and some matches not being played at all for want of a court at a time when both players are available. Such circumstances act as a significant disincentive. With last year's rather wet summer weather also affecting court availability, it is amazing that over four-fifths of the entrants played over half of their fifteen matches. More courts are desperately needed for this purpose, and especially if there is any increase in membership.
- o) There are a significant number of one parent families in membership, as well as others who would not normally be able to afford the typical high costs of playing tennis. Making the game available to children of low and basic income families is regarded as a high priority by the Club's Management Committee, and every effort is made to adopt policies which keep the enrolment and annual subscription fees to a minimum. The peppercorn rent required by Devon County Council for the children's use of the premises indicates a similar priority. An expansion of the Club's facilities resulting in an increased membership would enable more children in these circumstances to benefit from the game.
- p) Currently, there are no allotted parking facilities at Summerway. With the recent reductions in roadside parking, and the housing development (Peel Row) newly built directly opposite the access to the Club, it would

be highly desirable to provide off-road parking, especially if the Club is enlarged. Fortunately, there is a suitable strip of land, used at present as the Council's rear access to the Summerway Middle School playing field, which could perform this function. This is shown on the diagram. There is currently no right of way along this strip and across the playing field, and I will say more about this later. Extra parking places to those shown could exist on the strip nearer to Pinhoe Road. Visibility at the bottom of the drive may need to be improved.

- q) The three qualified Club coaches receive no payment for their services, and have no more reward than the satisfaction of doing an excellent job and seeing progress in the children. In this mercenary age, they are pure gold-dust, and everyone involved with Summerway values them very highly. Should any leave, finding a replacement willing to give their degree of commitment to the children would be a virtual impossibility. Individual coaching at present is given for a tiny fee which is totally swallowed by the associated material expenses. To show appreciation for their efforts and to give them the opportunity to earn a little cash if they so wished, the Committee would like to make one of the four extra courts available for use by our coaches for purposes of private individual lessons at the going rate. It is accepted that certain Club functions, such as tournaments, would have a prior call on any court thus dedicated. We would also wish to allow the possibility of holiday coaching groups requiring a reasonable subscription being run, open to both members (at a reduced rate) and non-members, from which our coaches could receive further financial benefit. Incidentally, this would extend the use of Club facilities to non-members on such occasions, which is another positive aspect to this proposal.
- r) Under the present constrained circumstances, no court provision can be made for an older member to continue with private tuition at Summerway beyond the age of eighteen, which means in practical terms that the link with the personal coach is broken at this point. It would be of universal advantage to allow serious players to maintain their links with coach and Club where it is agreed that this is desirable and the Club receives some benefit from the arrangement. This can only be achieved with adequate court availability. Such a player would almost certainly have assumed dual membership with one of the City's adult clubs for the latter years of Summerway membership, which is already one of the paths by which members graduate from the Club.
- s) Under the present Club Rules, adults are never allowed on court without children. It would be helpful, however, if this rule were to be relaxed in the case of specific adults only for just one of the new courts, providing its use was not required at the time by junior playing members. The beneficiaries of this perquisite would be members of the Committee and adults giving regular and dependable assistance at group coaching sessions. This would be an incentive to some to be of service to the children in these capacities.

- t) The role of assistant to the coaches during group coaching sessions would become far more prominent if the membership rose, with many more being required. Two-thirds of our LTA qualified coaches are “home grown”, and with coaching assistants becoming more vital to the structure of the Club, there is clearly an opportunity for older playing members to contribute in this manner. When age determines that they pass out of the playing membership, it would be possible for them to remain attached to Summerway as recognised coaching assistants. These could be encouraged at an early stage to consider the possibility of working for a coaching qualification. Taken with the incentive of opportunity to play as described above, assistants might be retained, and new qualified “home grown” coaches may well emerge.
- u) Friendly matches against other clubs are highly desirable at all levels after basic competence has been achieved. As any home match would render all other Club activities impossible under present circumstances, we cannot encourage “friendlies” as we would wish. Once again, the solution to the problem is more courts.

3. Other Points Concerning the Development of the Premises

- a) Unless anyone suggests otherwise, in which case we would need to reconsider, the obvious choice for the surface of the proposed additional courts is painted porous macadam. The two existing courts are macadam, but their porosity is questionable in places. Just painting them might bring them into line with the new courts visually, but this would seem unlikely to improve either drainage or footing. Should it be considered desirable to upgrade their characteristics, that would probably entail significant work and cost. We would not wish this to inhibit the proposed expansion, and could live with our present courts as they are if this is required. Obviously, any expert advice would be valued.
- b) While not shown and differentiated on the diagram, the single area of the premises not otherwise designated would continue to be a mixture of hard access and grass. That part of the area which lies between Courts 2 & 5 would be entirely hard, and contiguous with hard access linking Gates A, B & D, the clubhouse, and the surround of the new building. At no point would this hard access be less than four feet wide or include steps in consideration of those confined to wheelchairs.
- c) Similarly, differing levels are not shown on the diagram, but will need to be determined. Adding Courts 3 & 4 on the same level as Courts 1 & 2 should present no difficulty as the ground rises slightly. Courts 5 & 6 would need to be on a lower level, preferably the same as that of the Half-Court with Practice Wall and the surround of the new building. If it is best for the level of Court 6 to be intermediate between Courts 4 & 5 it would be helpful if access between Courts 5 & 6 at Gate F did not involve a step to avoid difficulties for the disabled. Access to Courts 3, 4, and 6 and the Court 5 Viewing Area could be tiered, giving four convenient lines at which to share the drop in level between

Courts 2 & 5 which I imagine would facilitate stability. Steps will probably be needed to accommodate Gates G & H. These are clearly matters for the experts in the feasibility study, and we would appreciate being advised of the options at this stage.

- d) The mesh of the existing chain link fencing around the present courts is slightly too large, as balls regularly become stuck and occasionally pass through. A slightly closer mesh would be appreciated. While a height of ten feet is adequate where fencing is required between courts, a height of twelve feet at the perimeter of the premises would be a great improvement as this increase would catch a high percentage of balls that pass over after bouncing. The significance of this point rises proportionately with increased proximity between Club and housing.

4. The Locality Outside the Club Perimeter

- a) Several years ago, Devon County Council placed a fence and padlocked gate to seal the gap between the far end of Court 1 and the rear walls marking the end of the back gardens of houses on one side of The Mede. Presumably, this was to prevent a right of way being established across the school playing field by common usage as members of the public, usually the younger element, used the route as a shortcut. Before this happened, it was a comparatively frequent occurrence to arrive at the Club to find the courts scattered with debris, frequently from empty drink bottles tossed high over the fence by returning late night revellers who seemed to delight in covering the courts with chunks and slivers of broken glass. Since the route was blocked, this hazard has occurred on one or two occasions only over a long period, presumably from the band of those seen to climb over the barrier. Before the advent of the fence and gate, the back gardens of those properties in The Mede may well have received their share of rubbish from the same source. The Club would not like to see a return of this peril, and would recommend that in any new development, no easement be granted over this strip of land. Instead, it seems perfectly suited as an off-road car parking and turning area for the Club, out of sight to residents of The Mede on account of the height of their back walls. Should Devon County Council still require access to any remaining green area of the playing field beyond the Three-Point Turning Area a similar gate in the boundary of the turning area would always give unimpeded access as hitherto.
- b) Animosity between the Club and its neighbours has never existed to the best of my knowledge. Relations have always been positive and encouraging whenever there has been any contact. It is true that we have received a letter recently from the doctor's surgery expressing concern over the trees on the Club premises when there are high winds, as a number have fallen or shed branches over the years. This perfectly understandable anxiety is not a bad reflection on the Club, however, and I believe the issue has been passed on to the Middle School whose

responsibility it now appears to be. If Court 5 and the Half-Court with Practice Wall are constructed, the Club would acquire a number of new immediate neighbours from Pinhoe Road and Thackeray Road whose rear gardens would back on to, or find themselves closer to, the expanded premises. The Club would endeavour to establish the same good terms with these new households to match those it enjoys already.

- c) However high the stop netting around the courts, balls (expensive items) are bound to escape, and access to the ground around the Club is an important consideration. If it is possible to retain a suitable strip of the playing field alongside the two sides of the perimeter currently bounded by open field for use in ball recovery and by members of the public who wish to watch the tennis, this would be a great asset. Some imaginative landscaping and a few strategically placed vandal-proof benches might render the area attractive, and also serve to deter those who have made a considerable nuisance of themselves in the past by causing damage to the fencing by their activities.
- d) The occupants of existing housing bordering the Club would almost certainly prefer to overlook tennis courts than to be overlooked by new housing. This might be a small point in the grand order of things, but any resentment or tension that can be avoided is good for the locality. The change from school playing field (benefiting the children) to tennis facilities (benefiting the children) is a smaller change of use and purpose than from playing field to housing, besides which there is a sizable need for greater provision of leisure activities for young people in the area.
- e) It should be noted that the Club inadvertently serves a useful purpose, just by virtue of being there, in keeping the peace in the neighbourhood by isolating Thackeray Road and The Mede to some extent. Fruit trees in the gardens of the latter have been observed to receive the attention of young inhabitants of the former, but war does not seem to have broken out yet! If the Club grows in size, this passive role grows likewise and might be reckoned as a positive spin-off.

5. Ownership and Administration

- a) The Exeter (Summerway) Junior LTC was founded in 1972, when individuals such as Mrs Joan Rowsell foresaw and negotiated into existence a tennis club for children, using the facilities previously enjoyed by The Mede Lawn Tennis Club until it folded. Basically, the premises are owned by Devon County Council and leased to the Club at a peppercorn rent, with the administration of the Club residing in the Club's Management Committee – a voluntary body. The Club has two *ex officio* trustees, currently Jon Cornish and myself, with the present lease expiring in 2006. To summarise, the premises are provided free of charge to all intents and purposes by Devon County Council, and the administration is provided free by the Management Committee, coaches and other volunteers. The children in membership are the beneficiaries,

and the fees expected of them are kept to a minimum, as even at this low level they are a struggle for some families to manage, especially if there is more than one child involved.

- b) With the current arrangements, the Club is bursting at the seams and is oversubscribed. If Devon County Council reinforces this success by investing in the facilities under discussion in this letter, the Management Committee is confident that it can cope with the increased burden of administration, provided this is on the same basis as hitherto. The risk to the Council is minimal, because the system of administration is proven over many years, and even if the voluntary administration did collapse at some point in the future, the Council's material asset would still be there in full value.
- c) The Club is not totally self-supporting financially, but this is only because the County Council covers major items of maintenance without charge to the members. In all other respects, the Club pays its own way. Many minor matters of maintenance are covered by the Club's volunteers, such as repainting the lines on court, cutting the grass, and minor improvements to the clubhouse and premises. If the Council required that the Club be run on a commercial basis, paying the salaries of those providing the administration and coaching, and recouping the costs of these and the maintenance by raising the subscriptions of the playing members, the Club as it exists would die. The vast majority would not be able to cope with the fees. Only those with affluent parents would be able to play the game under these circumstances. The present arrangements achieve a different goal – they make tennis accessible to the children of ordinary families, and as a result many youngsters can participate in a healthy sport that depends on non-contact skills that can be acquired without the need of being blessed with the physique of a Tarzan or an Amazon. For a significant proportion of the Club's membership, tennis is the only sport they play apart from whatever is obligatory at school. This strikes me as a strong argument in support of the Club's existing ownership and management principles.
- d) Ownership of the premises by Devon County Council or by Exeter City Council is far more appropriate than ownership of the premises by the Club itself, as its membership is transitory by its very nature. It is much better for the facility to be owned by the community in the shape of a local government body. Administration, on the other hand, is best handled by the Club's Management Committee, on the basis that "one volunteer is worth three pressed men." Even if you pay the 'pressed men', they are unlikely to have the same care for the children as their own parents and families. By providing the Club with maintained facilities, local government is enabling parents and certain dedicated well-qualified volunteers to give literally hundreds of children a highly valuable opportunity which would otherwise be out of their reach.

- e) If the plans involving the middle schools are implemented, it would be helpful if an appropriate person in the education system were appointed to coordinate school use of the premises, and to liaise with and report to the Club's Management Committee on this issue. It is clearly important for no problem to arise from a lack of communication or from an indefinite understanding of responsibility.

6. Summary of Possible Use of Courts

Courts 1 & 2	Tournaments	Middle schools
	Group coaching	Timed tournaments
	Singles box matches	Holiday coaching sessions
	Summer/Winter sessions	Regular club activity
Courts 3 & 4	Tournaments	Middle schools
	Group coaching	Timed tournaments
	League home fixtures	Singles box matches
	Holiday coaching sessions	Summer/Winter sessions
	Regular club activity	
Court 5		Tournaments (show court)
	Committee/Assistants incentive	
	Timed tournaments	Wheelchair tennis
	Home postal matches	Singles box matches
	Regular club activity	
Court 6		Tournaments Individual coaching
	Coaches overage incentive	Wheelchair coaching
	Timed tournaments	Singles box matches
	Regular club activity	
Practice Wall	Tournament warm-up	Middle schools
	Individual shot development	Coaching of specific shots
	Individual rally practice	

7. Summary of Gates on the Premises

Gate A	Disabled access to the Club premises
	Ball recovery from the parking area
Gate B	Access to Courts 1 & 2 during tournaments
	Access to Courts 1, 2, 3 & 4 for group coaching, school use, etc.
Gate C	Disabled access to Half-Court with Practice Wall
Gate D	Emergency disabled access from the Club
	Ball recovery from the surrounding land to the north and east
Gate E	Access to Court 5 during tournaments
	Disabled access to Court 5
Gate F	Disabled access between Courts 5 & 6

Gate G	Access to Court 6
Gate H	This gate would bear a warning sign: DO NOT OPEN DURING A RALLY ON COURT 4 Access to Courts 3 & 4 during tournaments and for regular Club use
Gate I	Access between Courts 1 & 2 and Courts 3 & 4 for school use, and during group coaching for Grades 1 & 2 and possibly Grade 3
Double Gates	Normally locked, but opened with discretion for school use, during group coaching for Grade 4 and possibly Grade 3, and when appropriate during Summer or Winter sessions. While an unusual feature, these gates would provide a great practical advantage, ensuring the session organiser has very rapid access to children and assistants on all four courts.

All gates would have a minimum width of four feet and have provision for easy padlocking. Where disabled access is specified, the mechanism for opening and closing the gates would be within reach of a person in a wheelchair, and easy to operate.

8. Other Points

- a) Both membership and the ratio of boys to girls is relatively stable from year to year. For the last five complete calendar years, the membership has averaged 85.6 and the ratios (expressed as a percentage) of boys and girls are shown in the following table:

	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994
Boys	53%	49%	52%	49%	55%
Girls	47%	51%	48%	51%	45%

These figures are very interesting, bearing in mind that all Club activities make no distinction between boys and girls. The only distinction made between members concerns standard of play, which determines the appropriate grade for group coaching. Considering the nearly 3:1 ratio of boys to girls in many large tournaments, we are clearly attracting a good proportion of girls into the game. There have been occasions when more girls than boys from the Club have entered a LTA tournament, and our girls team has headed the East Devon Junior Lawn Tennis League for the past three years in succession.

- b) Obviously, if plans go ahead, the present fence and hedge boundary between the Club and school playing field, together with its ball recovery gate, will need to be removed. Perhaps it may be possible to truncate or remove the trees just inside the southern boundary, and plant a substantial hedge in their place to reduce any noise and light pollution that might emanate from the Club and affect the residents of adjacent properties in Pinhoe Road. It is probably worth mentioning that an

existing tree planted in the field may be fairly close to the perimeter fencing near the **Half-Court with Practice Wall** which will need consideration.

- c) Where possible, design should reinforce practical requirements. Hard access to **Gates A & D** ensures that if any mud is picked up on players' footwear during ball recovery, the majority would be shed on the pathway and not find its way on to the playing areas. Similarly, besides the warning notice, the way in which **Gate H** hinges discourages players allocated to **Court 3** from thoughtlessly throwing the gate open and bolting across the back of **Court 4** while play is in progress.
- d) Because of the lower levels of **Court 5** and **Court 6**, they may be edged on the western and possibly northern side by walls or slopes. If this is the case, attention will need to be given to the problem of balls bouncing back on to the court instead of coming to rest near the stop netting. This nuisance could probably be overcome using a bit of imagination, and consultation on any proposals would be appreciated.
- e) A proportion of new members join Summerway having had experience of Short Tennis, gained usually from a sports centre or their school. Provision of facilities for Short Tennis at the Club as a part of regular Club activity would not be appropriate in view of the minimum joining age. Should the Middle Schools wish to promote Short Tennis using the service courts during school hours for their younger element, this would meet with the Management Committee's full approval. However, unless there is consistent surplus capacity at the Club, a lowering of the minimum joining age is unlikely, and Summerway would remain the natural progression for youngsters who outgrow Short Tennis.
- f) Participation in the rota of parental supervision is part of every family's commitment, and a condition of membership. That supervision is provided by one family at a time on each occasion it is required. Should the Club be expanded, it is envisaged that two families would be on duty rather than one, which has distinct advantages. The rise in the number of families involved would ensure that the frequency of supervision duty would not rise significantly, and thus would not increase the burden to the extent where it became somewhat of a disincentive.
- g) Almost certainly, there will be several unusual aspects to the proposed development of Summerway that will not meet criteria built into the policy of a number of bodies or organisations. If this proves true, it will be very sad if so beneficial a community project died from mere technicalities. It is to be hoped that sufficient goodwill, flexibility and discretionary powers exist and will be exercised so that all such obstructions are overcome.
- h) In the event of these plans going ahead, it will be necessary to consider the terms of the lease, as this has relatively few more years to run. Bearing in mind the huge success of the current arrangements over so long a period, an extension to the lease rather than re-negotiation might

be the most appropriate option. This issue, of course, depends entirely on the Devon County Council and its generosity towards the children.

I'm sorry that this letter has taken so long to compose. I have had to fit it in with all my other regular commitments, and apologise for the many faults of structure and expression which it must contain on account of its piecemeal construction and the lack of time for adequate revision. Hopefully, it lays down the foundation of our case, and gives you a fair idea of our thinking. I trust that you will be able to see beyond the shortcomings, omissions and repetitions of this missive, and share with us instead something of the vigorous enthusiasm we have for this bright vision of the future. We wish to serve the children to an even greater extent than we do at present, but this will only be possible if the Devon County Council is willing and able to give its full support to the enterprise. We and the youngsters will greatly appreciate every effort you make on our behalf to turn this dream into reality.

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely

Jim Harle
Vice-Chairman & Membership Secretary

EXETER (SUMMERWAY) JUNIOR LAWN TENNIS CLUB EXPANSION

