

Martin Dale

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 05 January 2026 00:11
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: planninginfo
Subject: DM/25/2223

Dear Mid-Sussex District Council,

Further to my representation submitted 2nd October 2025 regarding DM/25/2223, the application has been updated to now include the large event marquees and I'd like to make the following, additional comments.

This application seeks permission for the major redevelopment of the Saint Hill compound for the sole purpose of holding one large event once a year. The proposals are written to suggest it is simply improving existent provisions / upgrading them so as to minimise damage to the land in an attempt to minimise or downplay the development but it is important to note that the current use is illegal, and the change of use (car park) and temporary marquee structures have occurred without planning consent and are considered a planning breach.

This is not simply requesting permission to upgrade their current facilities, but seeking ratification for development that occurs annually without permission. They have willingly and knowingly breached planning rules consistently, what's to say they'll follow the rules and stick to what their plans say? This is important context when reviewing the application.

The church of Scientology have a demonstrated track record of flaunting planning laws and permits. For example in 2025, WSCC Highways approved a Planting Licence which would allow 35 new trees to be planted opposite the entrance to Saint Hill, but instead Scientology planted 105. There is no guarantee they will abide by the rules/confines of any planning permission granted, and I am concerned that this development would cause further disruption to the local community.

There has been no evaluation or analysis of alternative nearby venues that would be better suited or more appropriate. Why does this have to take place at Saint Hill in a newly built structure every year? Why does the AONB need to be built on in order to host this event, when there are plenty of alternative venues with the appropriate capacity and infrastructure to support it? There are viable alternatives, and indeed in 2014 the church hosted the event at their American headquarters in Clearwater, Florida.

Scientology are currently building a permanent large event facility at their Clearwater headquarters known as L. Ron Hubbard, where this event will eventually be moved to. This application, if approved, will provide facilities that would only be used for a couple of years - but would result in permanent alterations to a protected AONB.

There are no limits on how long the 'temporary structures' will be in situ for. It doesn't specify whether they will be up and down within 28 days or be in place for 3 months or longer as they currently are. In their Event field elevation plan, it says "Temporary structure to stay in place for no longer than 6 weeks of the year" however in the design and access statement it states "The temporary marquees for the IAS Event would be installed and fully removed within the period from 17 August to 30 November each year." (15 weeks).

There is also insufficient evidence the marquees need to be the size and scale proposed. In photographs of their event in 2025 published on their website, it is clear there are large portions of empty seats and vacant space at the rear of the marquees, meaning a much smaller structure would be suitable and result in less damage to the surrounding area.

It is unclear how many people actually attend this event, and therefore what infrastructure is required in order to support it. In their press statements, they claim 10,000 attend. In 2023 they told the Police they were expecting 6,000 guests. In the travel plan it says 5,000 people attend. The legal capacity of the tent can't be more than 3,000. The travel plan states that the number of cars for the IAS event was 1,100 and that 22% of the 5,000 attendees

arrived by car. This suggests all of the cars were single-occupant. However, in the following paragraph it states “On average around 56% who arrive to the site by car.”

The application form lists the total area occupied by temporary marquees as 8,100sq m, however the planning statement lists the three structures consist of an event tent (50 x 85m), catering tent (25m x 65m) and seminar tent (25m x 65m) which totals 7,500sq metres. This leaves 600 square metres (or 6,460sq ft) unaccounted for.

The Design and Access statement claims that the events “provide an economic boom” to the local economy, but no evidence has been provided to support this claim.

It also states “There was strong interest in establishing agreements for shared use of the car park during large events. COSRECI has consistently emphasized that community access is a core objective of the project, and subject to planning approval, these agreements will be formalized promptly” - this means Scientology are yet to reach a formal agreement with neighbours such as the sports and rugby clubs to use their new car park. So the claim that this development will also benefit them is speculative, and there is no guarantee they will actually permit the neighbours to use the car park for their events too.

There is insufficient evidence that the neighbouring Leisure Centre and Rugby Club need 600+ car parking spaces. Although it may be justified that an extension to the car park is needed, there is no evidence an expansion of this scale is warranted.

Along with changes to the proposed site, the amended block plans also indicate a differing site boundary to the original supplied map. No explanation has been provided for this change, and it is unclear where Scientology’s actual property boundary lies, especially in respect to the access route between the two fields and the new entrance. In addition, the property boundary in the map differs from the Land Registry map in that in the plans it crosses over the access road, but in fact it runs along its edge.

The connecting land between Hobbs and Juhring fields is not owned by COSRECI, but by the Hobbs family and there is no evidence they have obtained permission to develop their land.

There are also several concerning inconsistencies in the various documents supplied.

It states in the travel plan one of the objectives is to “To increase the use of alternative modes of transport over the single occupancy private car; including walking, cycling and public transport;” another is “To improve the health of staff and visitors through increased walking and cycling” and yet there is no provision to support these aims - no pavements, no pedestrian crossing for those coming from Rockwood or Fonthill Lodge and minimal bicycle storage. The Design and Access Statement includes a Cycle Stand in the materials palette, but it is not clear where this will be implemented or the capacity. In fact, they place obstructions across the footpaths in the area to prevent access.

The event this development seeks to support results in significant traffic on Saint Hill Road, and obstructions placed by the Church on the verge over the last three years have resulted in pedestrians walking in the road with no lighting or hi-vis jackets. No pavement or lighting around the entrances are included in the plans, and public safety is a significant concern that has not been addressed by the proposed development.

The goal of the Travel Plan is to reduce single car use by 10% over 5 years. If the car park is being built based on current demand, if they are successful in their objectives it means 10% of the car park will become obsolete in just 5 years, meaning in the longer term the destruction of the countryside is unjustified.

The Travel Plan states that 970 cars were in the Juhring Field for the IAS event, but the proposed development is only for 683 spaces meaning they will still be reliant on parking at the rugby club, leisure centre and Fonthill Lodge.

Contrastingly, the Transport assessment states that in 2024, there were only 825 car trips for the IAS event. It is unclear if this is one way or each way? Is it 1900?

The Travel Plan also states “Staff and visitors can be encouraged to cycle and walk” however it is unclear how this would be realistic, considering the staff live in Crowborough and are transported to and from the property by coaches provided by the church.

The Transport assessment says the plans are for 698 car-parking spaces; but the planning statement says 683 (113 permanent + 570 temporary); and the design and access statement says the provision is for up to 689 spaces. What is the correct number of spaces they are looking to create?

The plans also include provisions for coach drop off via the new entrance to Juhring Field, but they already have a designated coach drop off facility at the Stables and it is unclear why they can't use the existing facilities?

The transport assessment and road Safety Audit is based on regular day-to-day use, and there is no evidence of a survey taking place over the IAS event itself, meaning the figures are meaningless in determining the requirements for this development, which is centred around the IAS event.

There are several relevant cases which must be considered as part of this application:

DM/15/1773
DM/14/03748
DM/17/1199
DM/16/0734

I therefore strongly urge the Council to reject this application.

