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Planning Statement

(Including Sustainability and Noise)

**Q Leisure, The Old Sandpit, London
Road, Albourne**

November 2025



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Project Name:

Q Leisure

Location

Q Leisure, The Old Sandpit, London Road.
Albourne, Hassocks BN6 9BQ

Client:

The Padel Club

File Reference:

P2141

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Planning Statement has been produced by ECE Planning on behalf of the applicant, The Padel Club in support of a Full Planning Application for the development of the Q Leisure, The Old Sandpit, London Road, Albourne, Hassocks, BN6 9BQ ('the Site') to provide 6no. padel courts. The description of development for the proposals reads:

Construction of six padel courts together with a canopy structure; demolition of the existing sheds; and the erection of a clubhouse building with associated store, pergola and outdoor seating area, alongside hard and soft landscaping and all ancillary works.

- 1.2. The Applicant has previously undertaken Pre-Application discussions with Mid Sussex District Council which culminated in a response dated 30 July 2024 (reference DM/24/1443). The detailed response of the Pre-Application Advice can be found at **Appendix A**.
- 1.3. This statement sets out relevant background for determination of the planning application, including a description of development of the Site and its surroundings, the relevant planning history and planning policies, details of the proposed development, and an assessment of relevant planning policies and material considerations.
- 1.4. The proposals have also been informed by the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024 version), the Planning Practice Guidance, Mid Sussex District Local Plan and Albourne Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.5. The application for Full Planning should be considered with full regard to the following suite of supporting documents, drawings, and plans:

Planning Application and Notice Forms

Planning Statement

Location and Block Plans

Proposed and Existing Floorplans and Elevations

Design and Access Statement

Lighting Assessment

Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy

Ecology Reporting

2. The Site

- 2.1. The application site is located within the boundaries of a former sand pit situated along the line of the old A23, to the south of Albourne village in West Sussex. Please refer to Figure 1 for a detailed location plan of the application site.

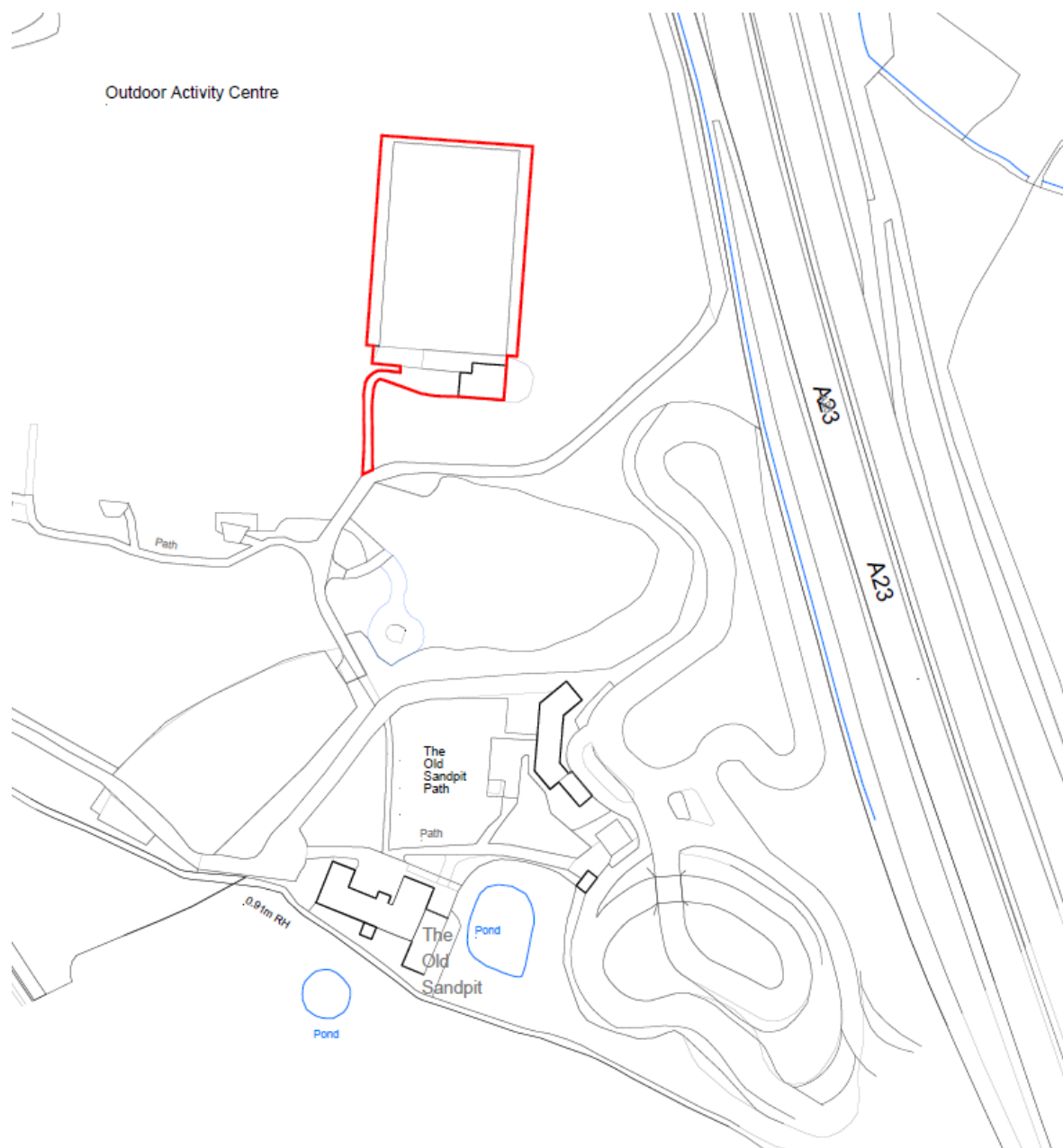


Figure 1- The Site (Red Line)

- 2.2. The application site comprises a rectangular area predominantly occupied by an all-weather artificial football pitch, which forms the central feature of the site. Located along the southern edge of the pitch are a series of outbuildings used for storage purposes which are set on a hardstanding area,
- 2.3. Demonstrated in Figure 1, the site forms part of a larger recreational facility known as 'Q Leisure' which hosts an 800 metre go karting track, shooting range, archery area and other family outdoor activities and a cafe.

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- 2.4. Vehicular access to the site is taken from the west via the old A23, which provides direct connectivity while maintaining a degree of separation from the village itself. The principal building, positioned towards the southern boundary of the site, contains a range of functions including office space, a bar area, and secure storage facilities supporting the wider leisure use.
- 2.5. To the eastern section of the site lies a purpose-built karting track, accompanied by several ancillary outbuildings that support its operation. To the west, an area has been designated for archery and other outdoor activities.
- 2.6. The specific area to which this application relates is located on the northeastern portion of the site. This parcel of land was previously granted planning permission (Ref: 10/03266/FUL) for use as an outdoor paintball activity zone. It is currently unoccupied and suitable for redevelopment within the context of the site's established recreational use.
- 2.7. The Flood Maps for Planning have been reviewed which reveal that the site is in Flood Zone 1 and therefore have no risk of flooding. The site is not subject to any surface water flooding issues.

3. Planning History

Planning Applications

- 3.1. A search of Mid Sussex planning register has been undertaken which revealed the following planning applications which are **most relevant** to this Planning Application.
- 3.2. **Reference DM/19/3876.** Proposed two storey, partially buried dwelling (warden accommodation for: 1) the wellbeing of overnight occupants of 9 eco pods as approved under ref DM/18/1807), now extant. 2) additional security issues in respect of approved 50m shooting range as approved under ref DM/18/4461; and 3) addressing existing and ongoing security and management issues associated with the existing business activities. **Refused 8 November 2019.**
- 3.3. **Reference DM/19/1361.** Proposed two storey, partially buried dwelling (warden accommodation for the wellbeing of overnight occupants of 9 eco pods as approved under ref DM/18/1807). New driveway access and associated hard and soft landscaping. **Withdrawn 23 July 2019.**
- 3.4. **Reference DM/18/1807.** Installation of 9 eco-pods. **Approved 10 August 2018.**
- 3.5. **Reference DM/18/4461.** Amendments to proposed shooting range as approved under application DM/17/3002 to create a maintenance and services area to the rear, reception and control area to the front and amenity rooms to the west flank. **Approved 18 December 2018.** This application was amended by application **DM/20/4243**, which has been implemented as set out in correspondence between MSDC and the applicant/owner.
- 3.6. **Reference DM/17/3002.** Proposed Change of Use of land from existing paintball and general use to indoor shooting range. Amended plans received on 29 August showing shooting range revised to be in an enclosed building. **Approved 12 December 2017.**
- 3.7. **Reference 11/00316/FUL.** Construction of paintball arena with ancillary changing and storage facility with extensive landscaping. **Approved 6 May 2011.**
- 3.8. **Reference 10/03266/FUL.** Construction of paintball arena with ancillary changing and storage facility with extensive landscaping. **Approved 4 January 2011.**

Pre Application Advice DM/24/1443

- 3.9. **Pre Application Advice Reference DM/24/1443.** To develop a padel tennis facility at Land at Grid Reference 526915 115403, London Road, Albourne, West Sussex.
- 3.10. As set out briefly in Section 1 of this Statement, the Applicant has previously undertaken Pre-Application discussions with Mid Sussex District Council which culminated in a response dated 30 July 2024. Please refer to Appendix A for a copy of the Pre-Application advice received.
- 3.11. In summary, the response concluded that,

It is my informal opinion that policies DP24 and DP25 provide support for this application as the addition of padel tennis courts would be considered as improved or enhanced leisure and community facilities, in addition they are viewed as the 'specific policy reference' that is referred to in policy DP12. Furthermore, the proposal would meet the criteria of Policy ALC1 of the Neighbourhood Plan, therefore, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle.

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Subject to satisfactorily addressing all the above-mentioned comments and policy requirements an application is invited.

- 3.12. The additional details suggested by the Officer have been submitted with this application in full.

4. The Proposal

- 4.1. This proposal seeks planning consent for the development of six padel courts, comprising four covered courts and two open-air courts, along with associated amenities including outdoor seating, landscaping, lighting, and on-site parking.
- 4.2. The primary components of the proposed development include:
- Four covered padel courts
 - Two uncovered padel courts
 - An outdoor seating area
 - Erection of a clubhouse replacing existing sheds
 - Stores for equipment and bins
 - Pergola
 - Soft and hard landscaping enhancements
- 4.3. The proposed layout, illustrated in Figure 2, has been designed around the footprint of the existing Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) previously approved under application DM/20/4243. The new padel courts will be positioned within this existing cleared area, which is set approximately 3200mm from the surrounding bund. The bund will be retained in its current form as the new development comfortably fits within the existing space.
- 4.4. The layout has been carefully planned around the retained outbuildings and prioritises access, circulation, and spectator engagement. The four covered courts will be oriented east–west and housed within a polycarbonate and glass canopy structure measuring approximately 48 metres by 23 metres, with a maximum height of 10 metres. Adjacent to them, two uncovered courts will be aligned north–south, offering a natural progression across the site and direct access to communal areas.
- 4.5. This configuration maximises space efficiency while enhancing user experience, with covered courts allowing year-round usability and open courts offering greater flexibility for casual and seasonal play. All six courts will be constructed to full padel sport specifications, featuring artificial turf surfaces, toughened glass rear and partial side walls, and wire mesh fencing where appropriate. The covered courts (Courts 1–4) will benefit from canopy protection for improved comfort and extended use throughout the year.
- 4.6. An outdoor seating and patio area is proposed to the south of the courts, designed for both players and spectators. This area will include seating creating a focal point for social interaction. The courts are expected to accommodate a maximum of 24 players simultaneously, significantly enhancing the site's recreational capacity.
- 4.7. New landscaping will introduce planters and screening shrubs to soften the site's visual impact and enhance privacy and comfort in communal areas.
- 4.8. Lighting will be incorporated within the canopy-covered courts to provide consistent and even illumination, ensuring safe play throughout operational hours. The two external courts will be equipped with controlled floodlighting, designed to minimise spill and glare. Further technical details are set out in Section 7.

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- 4.9. Vehicular and pedestrian access will remain via the existing entrance from the B2118. Parking will make use of the existing hardstanding areas, providing approximately 62 formal parking spaces. No additional parking is proposed, as the development replaces the previously approved shooting range use, which generated comparable parking demand.

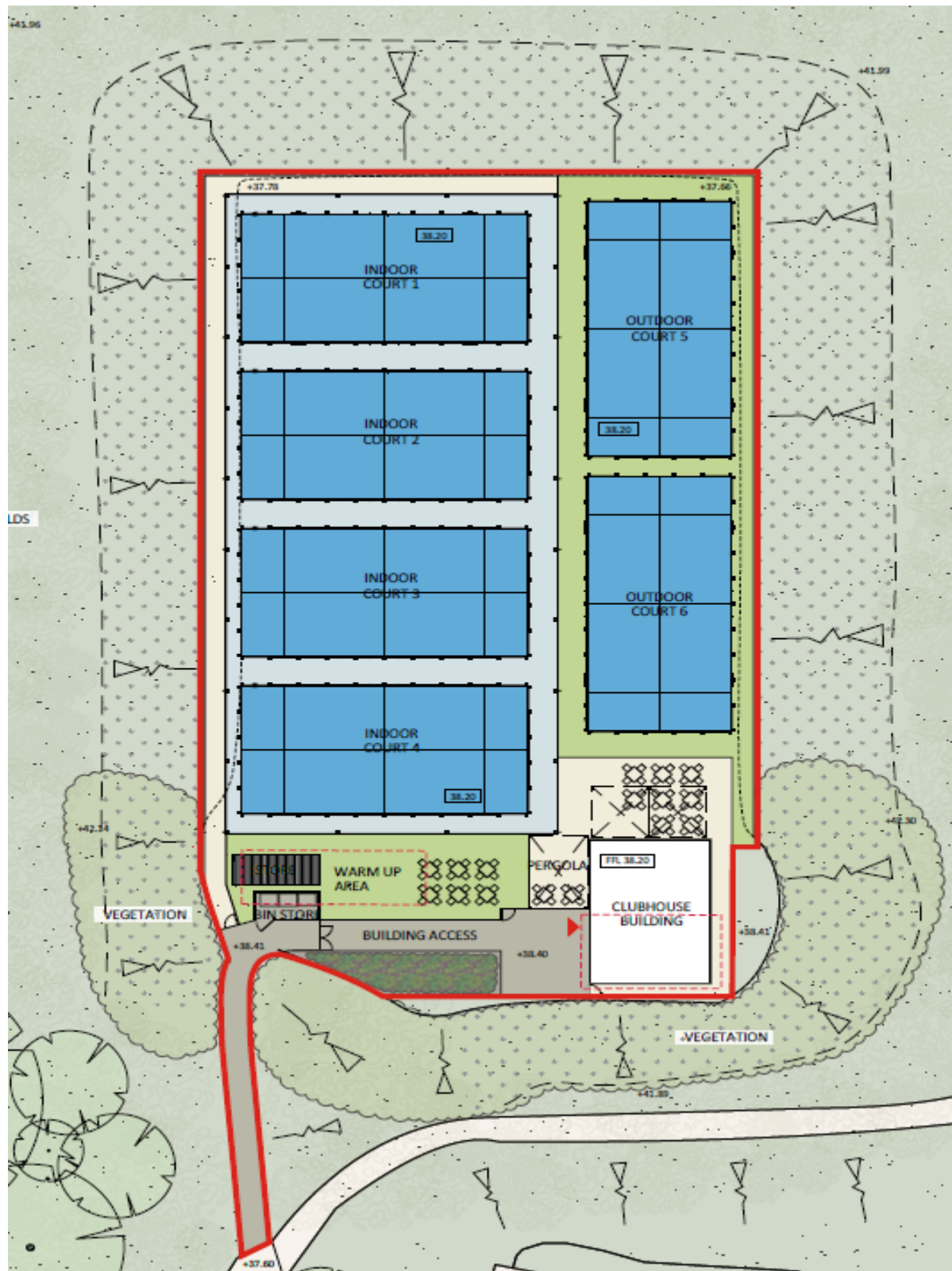


Figure 2- Proposed Site Plan

5. Padel Tennis

5.1. The Sport Padel

- 5.1.1. Padel or padel tennis is a mix between tennis and squash. It's a racquet sport for older and younger generations and people of all abilities - points are won by strategy and stealth more than just by sheer strength and power.
- 5.1.2. Padel is mainly played in doubles form on an enclosed court made of glass and mesh about a third of the size of a full-size tennis court.

5.2. History of Padel

- 5.2.1. Padel originated in the Mexican beach resort of Acapulco in the 1960s. The founder of Padel, Enrique Corcuera, was a wealthy businessman who didn't have enough space to install a tennis court. Instead, he built a smaller court surrounded by walls and decided to play with wooden paddle bats, hence the name that was attributed to the new sport as it developed.
- 5.2.2. At the start Padel was played only by the Mexican elite until Alfonso De Hohenlohe, a Spanish friend of Corcuera, fell in love with the sport. Shortly afterward, Hohenlohe built the first two European padel courts in Marbella. This was in 1974.



Figure 3- Early padel game in Mexico in 1962

- 5.2.3. Spanish King Juan Carlos and former Wimbledon champion Manolo Santana started to promote the sport, and its popularity quickly increased. The sport gained further momentum when Julio Menditengui, a friend of De Hohenlohe, introduced the sport in Argentina.
- 5.2.4. Since then, the sport has grown rapidly and is today considered one of the world's fastest growing sports in Europe, particularly UK, South America and North America. Today, Spain is the dominant country with its more than 20,000 paddle courts and four million active players.
- 5.2.5. In 1991, the International Padel Federation was founded. It is a non-profit organisation with the mission to promote the sport globally.

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5.3. The Padel Court

- 5.3.1. A padel court measures 10 by 20 meters and is enclosed by a combination of glass walls and metal mesh. The height of these surrounding walls varies, reaching up to 4 meters at the highest points and 3 meters at the lowest. The court is divided in the middle by a net, which stands at a maximum height of 88 centimetres in the centre and 92 centimetres at the sides. The playing surface is typically made of hard artificial turf, sport tarmac, or sport concrete, and is usually coloured.

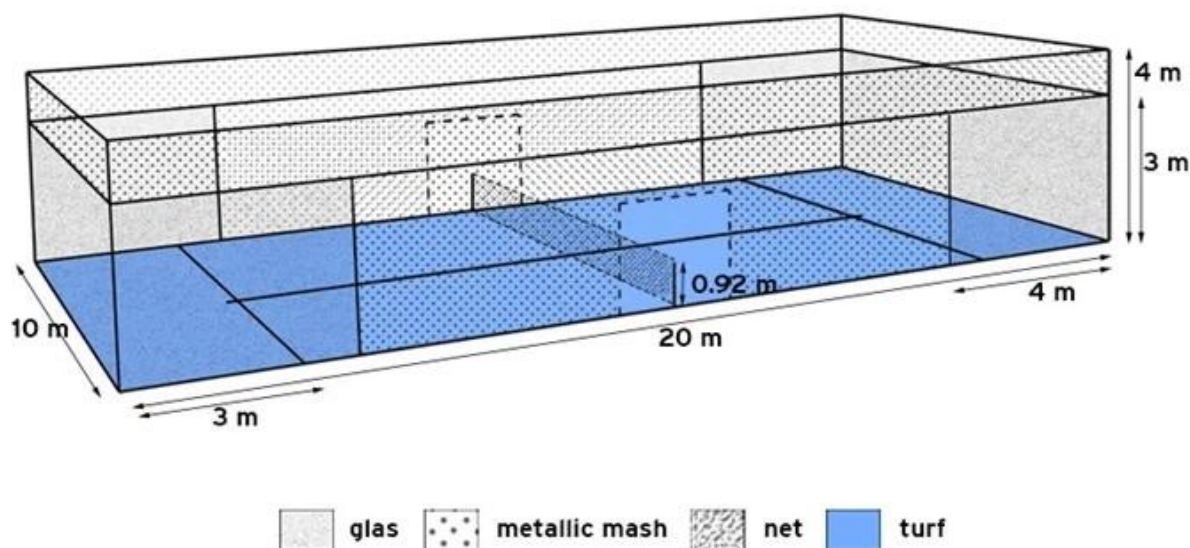


Figure 4- Padel court dimensions

5.4. How to Play Padel

Basics

- 5.4.1. Padel is primarily played in doubles format, with players using underhand serves aimed into the service box. The server must first bounce the ball and then strike it below waist level, with two serve attempts allowed. Once the ball is in play, it may only bounce once, and any shot that crosses the net must first land on the opponent's side before hitting a wall. Players are also allowed to return the ball by hitting it off the cage or wall on their own side, adding a unique dynamic to rallies.

5.4.2. Scoring

- 5.4.3. The scoring system in padel is the same as in tennis. Matches are usually played as the best of three or five sets, with each set made up of six games. To win a set, a team must win six games with at least a two-game advantage. If the score reaches 5-5, play continues to seven games. If it reaches 6-6, a tiebreak is played to seven points, also requiring a two-point margin to win. Additionally, many competitions now use the 'golden point' rule at deuce (40-40), where the next point decides the game.

How to Win a Point in Padel

- 5.4.4. Points in padel are won in several ways. A point is awarded if the opponent fails both serve attempts or allows the ball to bounce twice on their side. Hitting the ball into the net, out of the court without it bouncing on your side, or directly into the wall on your side also results in a lost point. Similarly, if the opponent hits the ball into the metal mesh on their own side or is struck by the ball before it touches the ground, the point is awarded to your team.

5.5. Equipment

- 5.5.1. Padel racquets differ significantly from tennis and pickleball racquets, primarily because they have no strings. Instead, they are made from a solid composite material and feature holes across the surface. The standard thickness of a padel racquet is 38 mm, and each one includes a safety cord attached to the grip, which players are required to use during matches for safety reasons.
- 5.5.2. Padel balls are similar in size to tennis balls but have lower internal pressure, which affects their bounce and speed. Due to this reduced pressure, they need to be replaced regularly. In professional play, such as the men's World Padel Tour, balls are replaced every seventh game. However, in amateur matches, players tend to use them for longer before switching them out.

6. Policy Overview

6.1. Introduction

- 6.1.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires, that where the Development Plan contains relevant policies, an application for planning permission shall be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations otherwise. In this case the Development Plan comprises:

- Mid Sussex District Plan (March 2018)
- Albourne Neighbourhood Plan (September 2016)

- 6.1.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and Supplementary Planning Guidance are material considerations, together with local guidance documents.

6.2. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 6.2.1. The NPPF, most recently amended in December 2024, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

- 6.2.2. The following extracts of the NPPF are considered most relevant in the determination of this application. The below are not explored in detail within this Statement but have been fully reviewed in preparation of this application

Chapter 2- Achieving Sustainable Development

Chapter 8- Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities

Chapter 9- Promoting Sustainable Transport

Chapter 11- Making Efficient Use of Land

Chapter 12- Achieving Well Designed Places

Chapter 14- Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change

Chapter 15- Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Chapter 16 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

6.3. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- 6.3.1. The NPPG elaborates on the guidance of the NPPF and is updated regularly. The most pertinent guidance of the NPPG on this scheme is the importance of good design in the pursuit of sustainable development and conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

6.4. Mid Sussex District Plan (March 2018)

- 6.4.1. The Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 was adopted at Full Council on 28 March 2018. The relevant policies are as follows:

Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside

Policy DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Policy DP17: Ashdown Forest

Policy DP21: Transport

Policy DP24: Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Activities

Policy DP25: Community facilities and local services

Policy DP26: Character and Design

Policy DP29: Noise, Air and Light Pollution

6.5. Albourne Neighbourhood Plan (2016)

- 6.5.1. Albourne Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan covers the whole Parish area for the period up to 2031. It sets out the development principles and allocation of areas for future building and land use.

POLICY Countryside - ALC1: Conserving and enhancing character

POLICY Countryside - ALC3: Local Gaps and Preventing Coalescence

POLICY Employment ALE2: Tourism

6.6. Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 Consultation Draft

- 6.6.1. The District Council is reviewing and updating the District Plan. Upon adoption, the new District Plan 2021 - 2039 will replace the current District Plan 2014-2031 and its policies will have full weight. In accordance with the NPPF, Local Planning Authorities may give weight to relevant policies of the emerging plan according to the stage of preparation; the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the relevant policies; and the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF.

- 6.6.2. The draft District Plan 2021-2039 (Regulation 19) was published for public consultation on 12th January 2024 for six weeks and as a result of this consultation there are unresolved objections to the majority of Policies in the draft District Plan. As such, only minimal weight can be given to the Plan and this planning application has been assessed against the policies of the adopted District Plan. The relevant policies include:

DPS2: Sustainable Design and Construction

DPS6: Health and Wellbeing

DPN7: Noise Impacts

DPB1: Character and Design

DPC1: Protection and enhancement of the Countryside

DPI5: Open Space, Sports and Recreational Facilities

DPI6: Community and Cultural Facilities and Local Services.

DPT3: Active and Sustainable Travel

6.7. Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

- 6.7.1. The Council has adopted a 'Mid Sussex Design Guide' SPD that aims to help deliver high quality development across the district that responds appropriately to its context and is inclusive and sustainable. The Design Guide was adopted by Council on 4th November 2020 as an SPD for use in the consideration and determination of planning applications. The SPD is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

7. Planning Appraisal

7.1. Introduction

- 7.1.1. This section of the statement details how the proposed development complies with the policies set out within the Development Plan. The following matters are the principal considerations with regards to the proposal:

Principle of Development

Design and Character

Amenity

Lighting

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

Flooding and Drainage

Highways

Noise

Sustainability

7.2. Principle of Development

- 7.2.1. The proposed development seeks to erect 4no. covered padel courts, 2no. open padel courts with associated provision of outdoor seating and landscaping at Q Leisure in Albourne.
- 7.2.2. As noted previously within this Letter, the site is identified in Mid Sussex Policy Area Maps as outside of the built-up area boundary of Albourne. By definition, the site is therefore located in the countryside.
- 7.2.3. **Policy DP12 (Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside)** of the Mid Sussex District Plan states.

*'The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided **it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and:***

- *it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or*
- *it is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.'*

Policy DP24 (Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Activities) of the Mid Sussex District Plan states.

'Development that provides new and/or enhanced leisure and cultural activities and facilities, including allotments, in accordance with the strategic aims of the Leisure and Cultural Strategy for Mid Sussex will be supported.

The on-site provision of new leisure and cultural facilities, including the provision of play areas and equipment will be required for all new residential developments, where appropriate in scale and impact, including making land available for this purpose. Planning conditions and/or planning obligations will be used to secure such facilities. Details about the provision, including standards, of new leisure and cultural facilities will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document.

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Sites for appropriate leisure and cultural facilities to meet local needs will be identified through Neighbourhood Plans or a Site Allocations Development Plan Document produced by the District Council.

Proposals that involve the loss of cultural facilities, open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, will not be supported unless:

- an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the cultural facility, open space, sports land or recreational building to be surplus to requirements; or*
- the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.'*

7.2.4. **Policy DP25 (Community Facilities and Local Services)** of the Mid Sussex District Plan states,

'The provision or improvement of community facilities and local services that contribute to creating sustainable communities will be supported.

Where proposals involve the loss of a community facility, (including those facilities where the loss would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs locally) evidence will need to be provided that demonstrates:

- that the use is no longer viable; or*
- that there is an existing duplicate facility in the locality which can accommodate the impact of the loss of the facility; or*
- that a replacement facility will be provided in the locality.*

The on-site provision of new community facilities will be required on larger developments, where practicable and viable, including making land available for this purpose. Planning conditions and/or planning obligations will be used to secure on-site facilities. Further information about the provision, including standards, of community facilities will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document.

Community facilities and local services to meet local needs will be identified through Neighbourhood Plans or a Site Allocations Development Plan Document produced by the District Council.'

7.2.5. While at local level **ALC1** allows for:

7.2.6. *'Development, including formal sports and recreation areas will be supported in the countryside, defined as the areas outside the Built-up Area Boundary shown on the policy map where the following criteria are met:*

- 1. It is necessary for the purposes of agriculture, or some other use which has to be located in the countryside;*
- 2. It maintains, or where possible enhances, the quality of the rural and landscape character of the Parish area;*
- 3. It is supported by a specific policy reference elsewhere in this Plan.*

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4. *It is necessary for essential infrastructure, and it can be demonstrated that there are no alternative sites suitable and available, and that the benefit outweighs any harm or loss.*

- 7.2.7. The development will provide a new sporting facility within the Q Leisure Club, which currently provides an Outdoor Go Karting Track, Axe Throwing Facility, Indoor and Shooting Range and MUGA. (with extant consent for a shooting range)
- 7.2.8. The introduction of padel courts is found to be fully aligned with the current recreational sports/leisure uses on site. The benefits provided by the new facilities will support sustainable growth of the local and rural economy which is considered to outweigh the fact the site is located outside of the built-up area boundary.
- 7.2.9. There is no principal conflict with adopted policy, which would support the provision of such facilities, subject to further consideration of the design and visual impact upon the character of the area and the impact upon the existing uses of the site.
- 7.2.10. This is further evidence by the Officer who stated in the Pre Application (reference: **DM/24/1443**) that,

'It is my informal opinion that policies DP24 and DP25 provide support for this application as the addition of padel tennis courts would be considered as improved or enhanced leisure and community facilities, in addition they are viewed as the 'specific policy reference' that is referred to in policy DP12.

Furthermore, the proposal would meet the criteria of Policy ALC1 of the Neighbourhood Plan, therefore, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle'.

- 7.2.11. The principle of development is therefore accepted for the proposals.

7.3. Design and Character

- 7.3.1. **Policy DP26 (Character and Design)** of the Mid Sussex District Plan states;

'All development and surrounding spaces, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings and replacement dwellings, will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside'.

- *is of high-quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace.*
- *contributes positively to, and clearly defines, public and private realms and should normally be designed with active building frontages facing streets and public open spaces to animate and provide natural surveillance.*
- *creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape.*
- *protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area.*
- *protects valued townscapes and the separate identity and character of towns and village.*
- *does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP27).*

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- *creates a pedestrian-friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible.*
- *incorporates well integrated parking that does not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed.*
- *positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design.*
- *take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (300+ unit) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed-use element.*
- *optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development*

- 7.3.2. The Council's Design Guide was adopted on the 4th of November 2020 and is a material consideration in the determination of the application. This document seeks to inform and guide the quality of design for all development across Mid Sussex District. It sets out a number of design principles to deliver high quality, new development that responds appropriately to its context and is inclusive and sustainable.
- 7.3.3. Within the Design Guide there is support high quality buildings that minimise their environmental impact under principle DG37. Principle DG38 requires architectural integrity and a sense of place where the facade and elevational treatment, roofscape fenestration and materials used in existing buildings within the locality should be a starting point for the consideration of architectural design of new buildings. In addition, design principle DG39 requires the scale of new buildings to relate to their context.
- 7.3.4. The proposed development responds positively to these principles through a sensitive and functional design approach which reflects both the site's rural setting and its existing recreational character. The layout builds upon the previously approved Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), maintaining the established open and level area while introducing high-quality sporting infrastructure.
- 7.3.5. The covered courts are contained within a lightweight polycarbonate and glass canopy structure supported by cold-formed structural steel sections. The frame incorporates a tapered trellis form, chosen to provide visual lightness and refined structural efficiency. The canopy adopts a gentle curved roof profile, designed to follow the natural topography and reduce perceived height when viewed from surrounding areas. This helps the development integrate seamlessly with the existing embankments and vegetation within the site.
- 7.3.6. Externally, the canopy utilises a combination of high-performance Serge Ferrari Protect mesh fabrics. On the north and west elevations, a green mesh finish (332-50201) has been selected to blend the structure into the landscape, visually softening the building against the backdrop of trees and grassed embankments. This material also helps limit glare and light spill during evening operation.
- 7.3.7. In contrast, the south and east elevations incorporate white mesh fabric (332-1323) to maximise natural light transmission within the courts and provide a bright, uplifting internal environment. The Opal roof membrane ensures diffused daylight, weather protection, and year-round usability, while maintaining a subtle, low-reflective appearance.
- 7.3.8. The overall material strategy of the canopy strikes a careful balance between technical performance and environmental sensitivity. The combination of muted green tones, soft translucency, and the lightweight form ensures the covered courts appear as a coherent and recessive addition within the landscape rather than an intrusive built mass.

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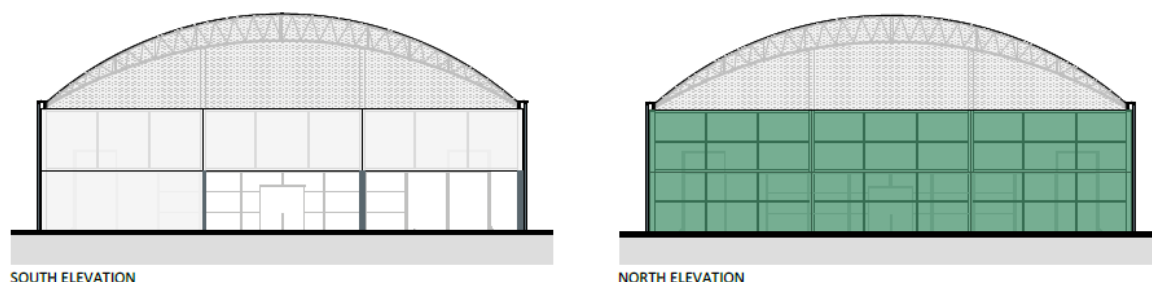


Figure 5- Proposed Elevations

- 7.3.9. The clubhouse adopts a contemporary yet sympathetic form, utilising natural and muted materials such as timber cladding and grey insulated metal panels, which harmonise with the landscape and surrounding built form. Its modest scale and horizontal emphasis ensure it sits comfortably within its context, while large glazed openings provide active frontages and natural surveillance over the courts and seating areas.
- 7.3.10. Together, the choice of materials, restrained form, and considered detailing create a cohesive architectural composition that complements the landscape and the wider site context. The combination of green mesh canopy, natural timber, and muted grey metalwork establishes a calm and contemporary aesthetic that aligns with Policy DP26 and the design guidance principles set out in the Mid Sussex Design Guide.
- 7.3.11. To the north, Bridgers Farm accommodates buildings that are substantially larger than the structures proposed within the application site, and all are located within the countryside



Figure 6- Bridgers Farm

- 7.3.12. The scale and prominence of the buildings at Bridgers Farm demonstrate that sizeable built form already exists within the immediate rural context. These structures contribute to a mixed rural character that includes agricultural and semi-commercial activity, rather than a purely undeveloped landscape. Against this backdrop, the proposed canopy and clubhouse are notably more modest, visually recessive and sensitively integrated through their lightweight construction, subdued colours and careful siting.

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- 7.3.13. Landscaping has been carefully considered to enhance the overall sense of place, with soft planting and screening shrubs defining circulation spaces and providing a natural edge to the development. The scheme retains existing vegetation where possible and supplements it with new planting to soften boundaries and contribute to local biodiversity.
- 7.3.14. Lighting has been designed to ensure safe and controlled illumination for evening use while minimising light spill to the wider area, in line with the rural setting and Policy DP27 (Noise, Air and Light Pollution).
- 7.3.15. The proposed design therefore achieves a cohesive, contemporary, and contextually appropriate sports facility that complements the surrounding countryside, contributes to local character, and meets the design expectations set out in Policy DP26 and the Mid Sussex Design Guide.
- 7.3.16. Please refer to the submitted Design and Access Statement for further information.

7.4. Amenity

- 7.4.1. **Policy DP26 (Character and Design)** of the Mid Sussex District Plan states,

'All development and surrounding spaces, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings and replacement dwellings, will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside'.

- *does not cause **significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings**, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP29)*

- 7.4.2. The nearest existing residential dwellings to the application site are a substantial distance away, approximately 200m to the north and the north-west. As such, no detrimental impact on the amenity of these receptors is considered to arise as a result of the proposed development.
- 7.4.3. In addition to the above, it is considered that the proposal will not detrimentally impact the existing uses of the site, which are prominently used for leisure and sporting purposes. It is important to note that the court will be in use between the hours of 06:00 and 23:00 Monday to Friday and 07:00 and 22:00 Weekends and Bank holidays which is considered to the use and the site.
- 7.4.4. It is noted that the site is located to the west of the A23, which provides a significant background noise level against which to assess any future uses. The padel tennis courts are not considered to generate any level of noise that would be appreciable from neighbours, when considered in this context and the existing and permitted leisure uses on site. For the purposes of this application, the noise from the road is considered acceptable.
- 7.4.5. Given the above, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable with regard to matters of amenity. It is however noted that the Officer states in the Pre Application (reference: **DM/24/1443**) that,

'Policy DP26 and DP29 of the Mid Sussex District Plan deal with neighbouring amenity in relation to overlooking, loss of privacy, reduction in sunlight and daylight, loss of outlook and noise and light pollution. As viewed on site the proposal is set a considerable distance from neighbouring residential dwellings, therefore, it is unlikely to have a significant detrimental impact in terms of noise, overlooking, loss of privacy, reduction in sunlight and daylight and a loss of outlook.'

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However, one of the main concerns was the potential impact of light pollution/spill from the flood lighting. It is recommended that consideration is given to this aspect of the proposal to ensure that the lighting is designed in a way to minimise it. Particularly given its relationship to the South Downs National Park. Any subsequent application should be supported by a lighting assessment.

Subject to the detailed design of the lighting, it is my informal opinion that the proposal would be acceptable from a neighbouring amenity point of view’.

- 7.4.6. Following the response from the Officer, the Applicant has appointed an external lighting consultant to provide an overview of the proposals. This is discussed in Section 7.5 below.

7.5. Lighting

- 7.5.1. To support the application, a series of lighting reports and specification drawings have been submitted to support the proposed scheme. These documents have been prepared by DFL-UK (Designs for Lighting Ltd) and include:

- Lighting Strategy and Technical Report (Ref: 3930-DFL-ELG-XX-RP-EO-13001-S3-P01)
- Baseline Lighting Survey (Ref: 3930-DFL-ELG-XX-BS-EO-13001-S3-P01)
- Horizontal Illuminance and Light Spill Drawing (Ref: 3930-DFL-ELG-XX-LD-EO-13001-S3-P01); and
- Vertical Illuminance Calculation Drawing (Ref: 3930-DFL-ELG-XX-CA-EO-13001-S3-P01)

- 7.5.2. The submitted documents assess existing lighting conditions, establish the baseline light environment, and set out the proposed lighting design for the new Padel courts and associated areas at Q Leisure, London Road, Albourne, Hassocks.

- 7.5.3. The design has been developed in accordance with BS EN 12193:2018 – Light and Lighting – Sports Lighting, Institution of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note GN01:2021 – Reduction of Obtrusive Light and Bat Conservation Trust & ILP GN08:2023 – Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK.

- 7.5.4. The reports identify the site as being within an E2 Environmental Zone (low district brightness sparsely inhabited rural area). The lighting strategy ensures that obtrusive light is minimised and that illumination levels remain appropriate to the rural setting and adjacent ecological receptors.

- 7.5.5. All luminaires specified utilise LED technology with a warm white colour temperature (≤ 2700 K) to reduce blue light content and potential ecological impacts. Luminaires are carefully oriented and shielded to control upward light spill, with horizontal and vertical illuminance levels remaining within the limits set out in ILP GN01:2021.

- 7.5.6. The light spill modelling (Refs: LD and CA drawings) demonstrates that illumination beyond the application boundary falls below 0.5 lux horizontally and 0.4 lux vertically, consistent with guidance for E2 zones and bat-sensitive habitats.

- 7.5.7. The Baseline Lighting Survey confirms that existing lighting levels around the site are very low, typically below 1 lux, and the proposed installation will not materially increase light pollution or result in adverse impacts on amenity or ecology when operated in accordance with the recommended controls.

- 7.5.8. A lighting curfew will be applied in line with best practice, ensuring the lighting is switched off outside of operational hours (typically between 23:00 and 06:00).

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- 7.5.9. In conclusion, the lighting design has been prepared to ensure compliance with relevant British Standards and professional guidance, to protect local amenity and ecological interests, and to provide safe and efficient illumination for evening operation of the proposed Padel courts.

7.6. Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

- 7.6.1. To support the application, a series of ecological reports have been prepared by Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology (LLDE). These comprise the following documents:

- **Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)** – Ref: *LLD3538-ECO-REP-001-00-PEA*;
- **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Statement and Metric** – Ref: *LLD3538-ECO-REP-002-00-BNG*;
- **Bat Emergence Survey Report** – Ref: *LLD3538-ECO-REP-003-00-BES*; and
- **BNG Metric Spreadsheet** – Ref: *LLD3538 BNG Metric.xlsm*.

- 7.6.2. The site comprises an area of approximately 0.23ha, located within the grounds of Q Leisure, The Old Sandpit, London Road, Albourne. The site predominantly consists of hardstanding, gravel surfacing and a small area of modified grassland, with limited ecological value. Surrounding habitats comprise grassland, scrub, and scattered trees/woodland which offer higher ecological potential within the wider landscape.

- 7.6.3. The PEA identified that the existing buildings provide low suitability for roosting bats, and that habitats within and adjacent to the site have limited potential to support reptiles, amphibians, badgers and invertebrates. Appropriate avoidance and precautionary measures are set out within the PEA to prevent any harm during site clearance works.

- 7.6.4. The PEA concluded that there are no statutory or non-statutory designated sites within the potential zone of influence that would be adversely affected by the proposals. The nearest site, *Wolstonbury Hill SSSI*, lies approximately 1.6 km to the south-east and is not predicted to be impacted by the proposed development.

- 7.6.5. In accordance with current best practice and the Environment Act (2021), the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Statement and associated DEFRA metric assessment were completed. The baseline ecological value of the site was calculated as 0.06 habitat units, primarily attributed to 0.031ha of modified grassland in poor condition. As the proposals are largely confined to the existing hardstanding, on-site opportunities for habitat enhancement are limited. Consequently, the development will result in a net loss of 0.06 habitat units (equating to 100% loss) and no significant on-site gains.

- 7.6.6. Due to the 15-year lease arrangement for the site, the applicant cannot deliver the required 30-year habitat management and monitoring necessary for on-site BNG compliance. To meet the statutory +10% BNG requirement, the client will therefore purchase off-site habitat units from an accredited provider (such as the *Iford Estate*, *Wiston Estate* or *The Environment Bank*) to offset the shortfall and satisfy the biodiversity gain condition.

- 7.6.7. The Bat Emergence Survey (June 2025) confirmed the likely absence of roosting bats within the two buildings. Low levels of general bat activity were recorded on site, including *common pipistrelle*, *soprano pipistrelle*, *noctule*, and *myotis* species, but all were foraging or commuting individuals. All bats recorded appeared well after expected emergence times and from multiple directions, confirming that no roosts are present

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7.6.8. The report concluded that no further bat surveys or mitigation measures are required, and that the proposed development is highly unlikely to contravene the protections afforded under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The report recommends ecological enhancements, including:

- Installation of bat boxes on the southern aspect of new buildings; and
- Inclusion of pale and night-flowering plant species within the soft landscaping scheme.

7.6.9. Subject to the sensitive implementation of the development and adoption of the avoidance and enhancement measures recommended by LLDE, it is considered that the proposal would not result in any significant adverse ecological impacts. The scheme provides an opportunity to deliver proportionate biodiversity enhancements and to achieve compliance with the Environment Act 2021 through off-site biodiversity unit purchase.

7.6.10. In conclusion, the ecological assessments demonstrate that the site is of low ecological value, that no protected species constraints preclude the proposed development, and that the BNG and ecological requirements can be satisfactorily addressed through off-site compensation and minor on-site enhancements.

7.7. Flooding and Drainage

7.7.1. To support the application, a detailed Surface Water Drainage Strategy has been prepared by Motion. This document sets out the proposed approach to surface water management, assesses flood risk, and demonstrates the suitability of the proposed SuDS measures for the site.

7.7.2. The site is located within Flood Zone 1, as defined by the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning. This represents the lowest category of fluvial flood risk. The nearest area of Flood Zone 2 lies approximately 230 metres to the west-southwest, confirming that the site is at very low risk of river flooding and is appropriate for the proposed development.

7.7.3. Environment Agency *Risk of Flooding from Surface Water* (RoFSW) mapping identifies the site as being within the Very Low surface water flood risk category, meaning the likelihood of surface water flooding is assessed as less than a 1 in 1,000 annual probability.

7.7.4. In accordance with national guidance and the drainage hierarchy, the surface water drainage strategy has been designed to manage runoff entirely within the site boundary using infiltration-based Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). The strategy incorporates a combination of Type A total infiltration pervious pavements beneath the padel courts and geocellular soakaways positioned to serve the remaining hard surfaced areas.

7.7.5. Hydraulic modelling confirms that the proposed system can attenuate and infiltrate runoff generated during the 1 in 100-year critical rainfall event plus 25% climate change allowance without any above-ground flooding. Both soakaways achieve acceptable half-drain times of 2,711 and 2,417 minutes in the 1 in 2-year event, and will retain approximately 40% spare storage capacity following the 1 in 100-year + 25% event. This ensures the system performs well within industry standards and provides robust on-site flood mitigation.

7.7.6. Surface water will be treated and attenuated through the pervious pavement sub-base and catchpit chambers prior to infiltration, ensuring compliance with the SuDS Manual and protecting groundwater quality. No increased flood risk will occur either on or off the site as a result of the development.

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- 7.7.7. The drainage strategy promotes sustainable water management, reducing reliance on traditional piped systems and encouraging natural infiltration. Geocellular soakaways are low-maintenance, resilient, and support long-term sustainability objectives.
- 7.7.8. In summary, the proposed drainage system is fully compliant with national and local policy requirements. It successfully manages surface water through infiltration, accommodates climate change, and prevents any increase in flood risk. As such, matters of flood risk and drainage do not present any constraint to the proposed development.

7.8. Highways and Parking

- 7.8.1. Paragraph 116 of the NPPF establishes that *'development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe'*.
- 7.8.2. In this context, it is considered that the proposed development meets the necessary criteria for safe and efficient access. The site benefits from an existing vehicular access point onto the B2118, which has been in use for previous activities on-site and is deemed suitable for continued use.
- 7.8.3. Furthermore, the proposal includes no increase in on-site parking provision due to the substantial amount of existing capacity of approximately 62 formal hard-surfaced spaces. This is considered sufficient to meet the expected demand generated by the proposed six padel courts, without resulting in additional pressure on the local highway network.
- 7.8.4. The site also enjoys a good level of accessibility via sustainable modes of transport. It is well-connected to nearby footpaths and cycle routes, encouraging active travel for users and spectators. Additionally, the site lies within proximity to existing public transport links, including nearby bus routes, further reducing the reliance on private vehicle use.
- 7.8.5. Overall, the access and parking arrangements associated with the proposed development are considered to be appropriate and proportionate to the scale and intensity of use. There is no evidence to suggest the scheme would give rise to an unacceptable impact on highway safety, nor would it result in residual cumulative impacts that could reasonably be considered 'severe' under the terms of Paragraph 116 of the NPPF. On this basis, there are no highways or transport-related grounds for refusing the application.

7.9. Noise

- 7.9.1. A Noise Impact Assessment has not been required in support of this application, given the existing ambient noise environment of the site and the absence of any noise-sensitive receptors within close proximity. The proposals have, however, been designed with due regard to the site's established noise context and relevant planning policy guidance to ensure no unacceptable impacts arise.
- 7.9.2. The application site forms part of the wider Q Leisure complex, which currently accommodates a range of outdoor recreational uses including an 800-metre go-kart track, a shooting range, archery, and other family-oriented leisure activities. These existing operations contribute to a relatively high and variable baseline noise level, typical of an outdoor leisure setting.
- 7.9.3. The site is bounded to the east by the B2118 (London Road), which carries a regular flow of vehicular traffic between Albourne and Hassocks. The combination of traffic noise and the ongoing operation of the go-kart track establishes a dominant acoustic environment characterised by intermittent high-level sound events associated with engines and road movements.

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- 7.9.4. The proposed padel courts are located towards the north-eastern portion of the site, within an existing area of hardstanding that has previously accommodated outdoor recreation. The nearest residential properties are located over 300 metres away, separated by intervening commercial and leisure land uses, bunding, and established tree cover. As such, the potential for adverse noise impacts on residential amenity is negligible.
- 7.9.5. The primary sources of sound associated with the proposed development will comprise player activity (impact sounds from rackets and ball strikes) and occasional short-term vocalisation from players and spectators. These are typical of outdoor sports uses and are significantly lower in level and duration than the noise generated by existing activities on the wider site.
- 7.9.6. The four covered courts will be housed within a polycarbonate and glass canopy, which will act to absorb and deflect airborne sound, thereby further reducing the potential for noise propagation beyond the site boundary. The two uncovered courts are positioned to the west of this structure, screened by existing bunding
- 7.9.7. The proposed development would not give rise to significant adverse effects as defined by the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE, 2010). The padel courts represent a compatible and complementary use within an existing outdoor leisure environment.
- 7.9.8. Given the nature of the existing soundscape, the proposed use will not materially alter the overall acoustic character of the site or the surrounding area. The proposals are therefore considered to comply with Policy DP29 (Noise, Air and Light Pollution) of the Mid Sussex District Plan, which seeks to ensure that development minimises adverse noise impacts on health, quality of life and amenity.
- 7.9.9. In conclusion, the proposed padel courts are located in an area already subject to high ambient noise levels from road traffic and established leisure operations. The absence of nearby noise-sensitive receptors, combined with the design and operational controls of the scheme, ensures that the development will not result in any unacceptable noise impacts.
- 7.9.10. The proposal is therefore considered entirely acceptable in acoustic terms.

7.10. Sustainability

- 7.10.1. The scheme has been designed with a strong commitment to sustainability, both in terms of construction methodology and long-term operation. The approach focuses on reducing embodied carbon, minimising waste, and selecting materials and systems that support durability, adaptability, and energy efficiency.
- 7.10.2. Both the clubhouse and court canopy structures employ modular and demountable components, enabling efficient assembly and potential disassembly or reuse at the end of their lifespan. This design philosophy significantly reduces construction waste and allows materials to be recycled or repurposed, supporting the principles of a circular economy.
- 7.10.3. The steel canopy framework will be fabricated locally within West Sussex, minimising transport distances and associated emissions. Steel has been chosen for its recyclability and structural efficiency, ensuring a lightweight yet durable solution. The canopy's high-performance fabric membrane contributes to passive environmental control by maximising natural daylight, reducing the need for artificial lighting during daytime operation, and providing solar shading to moderate internal temperatures.

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- 7.10.4. The clubhouse utilises locally sourced, robust, and low-maintenance materials, including timber cladding from responsibly managed forests and insulated metal panels designed to optimise thermal performance. These materials have been selected for their longevity and ability to withstand the local climate with minimal upkeep, extending their service life and lowering future environmental impact.
- 7.10.5. Energy efficiency and operational sustainability are further enhanced through the use of LED lighting, low-energy fittings, and opportunities for natural ventilation throughout the building and covered courts. Water-saving fixtures and sustainable drainage measures will also be incorporated where feasible to limit resource consumption and manage surface water effectively.
- 7.10.6. Collectively, the proposed design prioritises a low-carbon, resilient, and adaptable construction strategy that aligns with the sustainability objectives of the Mid Sussex Design Guide (DG37) and the broader aims of Policy DP26. The development demonstrates how high-quality recreational facilities can be delivered in a responsible and environmentally conscious manner, ensuring long-term benefits for both users and the surrounding landscape.

8. Conclusions

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a Full Planning Application for the Construction of six padel courts together with a canopy structure; demolition of the existing sheds; and the erection of a clubhouse building with associated store, pergola and outdoor seating area, alongside hard and soft landscaping and all ancillary works at Q Leisure, The Old Sandpit, London Road, Albourne.

- 8.1. The proposals represent an efficient and beneficial use of land within an established leisure complex that already accommodates a wide range of outdoor recreational activities. The development is directly aligned with the operational character of Q Leisure and complements the existing mix of uses on site, enhancing the facility's sporting offer and supporting continued investment in the rural economy.
- 8.2. The principle of development is firmly supported by the Development Plan. Policies DP24 and DP25 actively encourage the provision of new and enhanced leisure and community facilities, while Policy DP12 confirms that development in the countryside may be accepted where supported by specific policy references, as is the case here. The Albourne Neighbourhood Plan similarly supports new formal sports and recreation provision. Pre-Application advice issued by Mid Sussex District Council also confirmed that the principle is acceptable.
- 8.3. The design of the scheme responds positively to the site's rural setting and character. The lightweight canopy structure muted green and white mesh treatments, and gentle roof profile ensure the covered courts sit unobtrusively within the former sandpit. The new clubhouse adopts a contemporary but modest form, using natural materials that harmonise with existing buildings. Soft landscaping further integrates the development into its surroundings.
- 8.4. Specialist assessments in relation to lighting, ecology, drainage and noise demonstrate that the proposals would not give rise to unacceptable impacts. The Lighting Strategy confirms that illumination is tightly controlled, with extremely low spill beyond the site boundary in accordance with ILP GN01:2021 and relevant British Standards, protecting both amenity and wildlife.
- 8.5. The ecological assessment identifies the site as being of low ecological value. No protected species or designated sites would be harmed by the proposals, and opportunities for enhancement have been incorporated into the design. Biodiversity Net Gain will be delivered through the purchase of accredited off-site units, ensuring full compliance with the Environment Act 2021.
- 8.6. The Surface Water Drainage Strategy prepared by Motion confirms that the site is at very low risk of flooding and that the development incorporates a SuDS-led approach, including Type A total infiltration pervious pavements and geocellular soakaways. The system provides sufficient capacity for the 1 in 100-year event plus a 25% climate change allowance, with no flooding on or off site. The strategy therefore satisfies national and local drainage requirements.
- 8.7. Highway matters have been fully addressed. The proposal makes use of the existing site access and the substantial on-site parking capacity, with no intensification that would place pressure on the local network.
- 8.8. Noise considerations have been assessed in the context of the site's existing leisure uses and traffic on the B2118. The padel courts will generate only low-level, intermittent sound typical of outdoor sports and will not materially alter the existing acoustic character. The absence of nearby sensitive receptors, combined with the buffering provided by the canopy and bunding, ensures full compliance with Policy DP29.

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- 8.9. Sustainability principles have been embedded throughout the scheme. Modular construction, local fabrication of the steel frame, recyclable materials, energy-efficient lighting and opportunities for natural ventilation all contribute to a low-carbon and resilient design package aligned with Policy DP26 and the Mid Sussex Design Guide.
- 8.10. When assessed as a whole, the proposal accords with the Development Plan and reflects the overarching aims of national planning policy. The scheme delivers a sensitively designed, high-quality recreational facility on land that is already suited to leisure use, providing a valuable addition to local sports infrastructure.
- 8.11. It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission be granted.

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Pre Application Advice (ref: DM/24/1443)

Saskia Lower

From: Joseph Swift <Joseph.Swift@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 30 July 2024 16:20
To: Saskia Lower; Chris Barker
Subject: Pre-application advice
Attachments: msdc-local-list-september-2022-3.pdf

Dear Chris and Saskia,

RE: To develop a padel tennis facility

AT: Land At Grid Reference 526915 115403, London Road, Albourne, West Sussex

REFERENCE: DM/24/1443

Following our site visit these notes cover what was discussed.

The proposal is seeking to enlarge the existing cut out which is currently an all weather pitch in order to accommodate 4 padel tennis courts with canopies and 2 outdoor padel tennis courts. Two existing buildings on site will be retained and re-used as changing rooms/ refreshments and as part of the proposal there is to be an outdoor seating area and firepit. The application site is designated within the Mid Sussex District Plan as being within the Countryside as such a proposal of this type would be assessed against the following:

Mid Sussex District Plan

DP12 Protection and enhancement of countryside
DP17 Ashdown Forest
DP21 Transport
DP24 Leisure and cultural facilities and activities
DP25 Community facilities and local services
DP29 Noise, air and light pollution

Mid Sussex Site Allocations Document (DPD)

Site Allocations Development Plan Document as adopted on 29th June 2022. It allocates sufficient housing and employment land to meet identified needs 2031.

There are no policies relevant to this application.

Albourne Neighbourhood Plan

The Albourne Neighbourhood Plan was made on the 22nd September 2016 and forms part of the development plan for this part of Mid Sussex.

Relevant policies:

POLICY Countryside - ALC1: Conserving and enhancing character
POLICY Countryside - ALC3: Local Gaps and Preventing Coalescence
POLICY Employment ALE2: Tourism

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 Consultation Draft

The District Council is reviewing and updating the District Plan. Upon adoption, the new District Plan 2021 - 2039 will replace the current District Plan 2014-2031 and its policies will have full weight. In accordance with the NPPF, Local Planning Authorities may give weight to relevant policies of the emerging plan according to the stage of preparation; the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the relevant policies; and the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF. The draft District Plan 2021-2039 (Regulation 19) was published for public consultation on 12th January 2024 for six weeks and as a result of this consultation there are unresolved objections to the majority of Policies in the draft District Plan. As such, only minimal weight can be given to the Plan and this planning application has been assessed against the policies of the adopted District Plan. The relevant policies include:

DPS2: Sustainable Design and Construction
DPS6: Health and Wellbeing
DPN7: Noise Impacts
DPB1: Character and Design
DPC1: Protection and enhancement of the Countryside
DPI5: Open Space, Sports and Recreational Facilities
DPI6: Community and Cultural Facilities and Local Services.
DPT3: Active and Sustainable Travel

Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The Council has adopted a 'Mid Sussex Design Guide' SPD that aims to help deliver high quality development across the district that responds appropriately to its context and is inclusive and sustainable. The Design Guide was adopted by Council on 4th November 2020 as an SPD for use in the consideration and determination of planning applications. The SPD is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

A copy of the Design Guide SPD is available via the following link:

<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/5611/mid-sussex-design-guide-spd.pdf>

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is also a material planning consideration.

Principle

The site lies within the countryside as defined in the District Plan. Policy DP12 states:

'The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and:

- it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or*
- it is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.'*

Policy DP24 in the DP states:

'Development that provides new and/or enhanced leisure and cultural activities and facilities, including allotments, in accordance with the strategic aims of the Leisure and Cultural Strategy for Mid Sussex will be supported.

The on-site provision of new leisure and cultural facilities, including the provision of play areas and equipment will be required for all new residential developments, where appropriate in scale and impact, including making land available for this purpose. Planning conditions and/or planning obligations will be used to secure such facilities. Details about the provision, including standards, of new leisure and cultural facilities will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document.

Sites for appropriate leisure and cultural facilities to meet local needs will be identified through Neighbourhood Plans or a Site Allocations Development Plan Document produced by the District Council.

Proposals that involve the loss of cultural facilities, open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, will not be supported unless:

- an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the cultural facility, open space, sports land or recreational building to be surplus to requirements; or*
- the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.'*

Policy DP25 in the DP states:

'The provision or improvement of community facilities and local services that contribute to creating sustainable communities will be supported.

Where proposals involve the loss of a community facility, (including those facilities where the loss would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs locally) evidence will need to be provided that demonstrates:

- that the use is no longer viable; or*
- that there is an existing duplicate facility in the locality which can accommodate the impact of the loss of the facility; or*
- that a replacement facility will be provided in the locality.*

The on-site provision of new community facilities will be required on larger developments, where practicable and viable, including making land available for this purpose. Planning conditions and/or planning obligations will be used to secure on-site facilities. Further information about the provision, including standards, of community facilities will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document.

Community facilities and local services to meet local needs will be identified through Neighbourhood Plans or a Site Allocations Development Plan Document produced by the District Council.'

While at local level ALC1 allows for:

'Development, including formal sports and recreation areas will be supported in the countryside, defined as the areas outside the Built up Area Boundary shown on the policy map where the following criteria are met:

- 1. It is necessary for the purposes of agriculture, or some other use which has to be located in the countryside;*
- 2. It maintains, or where possible enhances, the quality of the rural and landscape character of the Parish area;*
- 3. It is supported by a specific policy reference elsewhere in this Plan.*
- 4. It is necessary for essential infrastructure and it can be demonstrated that there are no alternative sites suitable and available, and that the benefit outweighs any harm or loss.'*

It is my informal opinion that policies DP24 and DP25 provide support for this application as the addition of padel tennis courts would be considered as improved or enhanced leisure and community facilities, in addition they are viewed as the 'specific policy reference' that is referred to in policy DP12. Furthermore, the proposal would meet the criteria of Policy ALC1 of the Neighbourhood Plan, therefore, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle.

Design and Character

Policy DP26 of the District Plan relates to character and design and states:

'All development and surrounding spaces, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings and replacement dwellings, will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that development:

- is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace;*
- contributes positively to, and clearly defines, public and private realms and should normally be designed with active building frontages facing streets and public open spaces to animate and provide natural surveillance;*
- creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;*
- protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;*
- protects valued townscapes and the separate identity and character of towns and villages;*
- does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP27);*
- creates a pedestrian-friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible;*
- incorporates well integrated parking that does not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed;*
- positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design;*
- take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (300+ unit) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed use element;*
- optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development.'*

The Council's Design Guide was adopted on the 4th November 2020 and thus is a material consideration in the determination of the application. This document seeks to inform and guide the quality of design for all development across Mid Sussex District. It sets out a number of design principles to deliver high quality, new development that responds appropriately to its context and is inclusive and sustainable. Within the Design Guide there is support high quality buildings that minimise their environmental impact under principle DG37. Principle DG38 requires architectural integrity and a sense of place where the facade and elevational treatment, roofscape fenestration and materials used in existing buildings within the locality should be a starting point for the consideration of architectural design of new buildings. In addition, design principle DG39 requires the scale of new buildings to relate to their context.

From the plans provided, while the structures are fairly large, due to the existing bunding around the application site there would only be limited visibility of the proposed canopies, furthermore, due to the design of padel tennis courts, a large amount of the walls will be glazed or mesh which would help to break up the massing. It is recommended that consideration is given to the materials and finish of the canopy, it is noted that you are looking to create a Dutch barn style roof to be reminiscence of an agricultural building, particular care should be given to the materials and finishes to ensure that comes across, as a semi-translucent plastic sheeting style roof would not be comparable to the traditional Dutch barn roofing material.

The proposed buildings would be viewed in context to the wider leisure use and as such it would not appear as an isolated form of development within the Countryside. Furthermore, due to level changes and natural screening there would be limited views from the South Downs National Park. Consequently, subject to the detailed design it is my informal opinion that the proposal would be of an appropriate design, size and scale.

Neighbouring Amenity

Policy DP26 and DP29 of the Mid Sussex District Plan deal with neighbouring amenity in relation to overlooking, loss of privacy, reduction in sunlight and daylight, loss of outlook and noise and light pollution. As viewed on site the proposal is set a considerable distance from neighbouring residential dwellings, therefore, it is unlikely to have a significant detrimental impact in terms of noise, overlooking, loss of privacy, reduction in sunlight and daylight and a loss of outlook.

However, one of the main concerns was the potential impact of light pollution/spill from the flood lighting. It is recommended that consideration is given to this aspect of the proposal to ensure that the lighting is designed in a

way to minimise it. Particularly given its relationship to the South Downs National Park. Any subsequent application should be supported by a lighting assessment.

Subject to the detailed design of the lighting, it is my informal opinion that the proposal would be acceptable from a neighbouring amenity point of view.

Highways

Please be advised that we would need to consult WSCC Highways in regards to any highways safety implications from the proposed development.

If you wish to seek per-application advice from WSCC Highways prior to submitting an application, details of their pre-application advice procedure can be viewed via the following link:

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/planning/planning-pre-application-advice/#request-planning-advice>

However, as highlighted at the site visit, the wider site already has a leisure use and the site benefits from a large carpark, as such it is not anticipated that this proposed use would give rise to a significant number of vehicle movements or increase parking demand beyond current availability.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is an approach to planning and land management that leaves the natural environment in a better state than it was before. BNG will deliver measurable improvements for biodiversity by enhancing or creating new habitats in association with development. The requirement for BNG does not alter the existing legal requirements and protections for the natural environment such as protecting important habitats and species.

Biodiversity net gain is already referenced in the NPPF para 180 d) and opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of the design of the scheme especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

From 2024, all planning permissions granted in England, with a few exemptions, will have to deliver a minimum of 10% BNG under the Environment Act 2021. BNG is calculated using the approved Biodiversity Metric which measures the biodiversity value of habitats in 'biodiversity units' as a proxy for nature. The Biodiversity Metric is used to assess how a development might change the biodiversity value of a site. It can help to inform the design, layout and management of a site to support biodiversity. You are also advised to apply the mitigation hierarchy in your proposed development as set out in NPPF paragraph 180 a) and note the principle of additionality.

Further guidance is available via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-net-gain>.

Impact on Ashdown Forest

The proposal has the potential to increase the number of traffic movements across the Ashdown Forest that may have an adverse impact on the amount of nitrogen dioxide pollution deposited on the lowland heaths that make up the Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC), a site of European importance.

Proposed development planned as part of the Mid Sussex District Plan has been accompanied by a Habitats Regulation Assessment, part of which was informed by the Mid Sussex Transport Study. Where proposals have been included in the Transport Study, the council can undertake a Screening Assessment. However, where proposals have not been included, the council needs to satisfy itself on the potential traffic impacts as part of a Habitats Regulation Assessment in terms of screening and any further appropriate assessment.

Windfall sites such as this will be considered on a case-by-case basis at the time of determining any application. The case officer would contact you at an early stage once an application has been submitted, to

advise whether there is sufficient capacity in the amount of development proposed in this area at the relevant time, meaning that the council can undertake a Screening Assessment, or not.

Further information on this matter can be found on our website via the following link (scroll down towards the bottom):

<http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/protecting-ashdown-forest/>

Other Matters

It is recommended any subsequent application is supported with the following documents as per the attached local list:

- Lighting Assessment
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Planning statement

Conclusion

Subject to satisfactorily addressing all the above mentioned comments and policy requirements an application is invited.

Community Involvement

I would strongly suggest approaching the local residents in advance of any application submission in accordance with the recommendations in the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement:

<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/consultation-monitoring/>

You may also wish to contact Albourne Parish Council to discuss your proposals as well.

The aim of pre-application consultation is to encourage discussion before a formal application is made enabling communities to have real influence over proposals before they are finalised. The process can help to identify improvements and overcome objections at a later stage.

The views in this email are at officer level only and do not prejudice the Council from making whatever decision it considers appropriate on any application subsequently submitted.

The information contained in pre-planning advice may be subject to public disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Unless the information contained is legally exempt from disclosure, we cannot guarantee that we will not provide the whole or part of this advice to a third party making a request for information about the subject matter.

Yours sincerely

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