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Dear Sir/Madam

Outdoor padel courts at Unit 34, Gatehouse Hub, Goddards Green

Dowsettmayhew Planning Partnership has been instructed by Bedford Park Developments to submit a full planning application for the creation of three outdoor padel tennis courts at Unit 34, Gatehouse Hub, Goddards Green.

Planning application DM/23/1051 granted consent for the creation of a vibrant mixed use commercial park, incorporating a wellness centre (Class E(d)) and 19 units for Class E(g), B2 or B8 uses. A subsequent Section 73 application (DM/24/0318) approved minor material amendments to the design of Unit 34.

The commercial park, now known as Gatehouse Hub, has been delivered in accordance with the approved plans. The applicants are now preparing to commence Phase II, which will provide an additional 1,640 sqm of commercial floor space, and relocate the originally approved Wellness Centre, further enhancing the site's offer.

Unit 34 was completed and occupied under its approved Class E(g) use in April 2025. In September 2025 works began to fit out the building for use as a Padel facility, (Class E(d)).

The application site forms part of the curtilage of Unit 34.

Given Unit 34's lawful use is for Class E(g) and that a change to Class E(d) does not amount to development, it follows that the associated land within the curtilage similarly does not require consent for change of use. However, the physical structures required for the outdoor courts, due to their height exceeding 2 metres, do constitute development that requires consent.

This application therefore seeks consent for these works and is supported by this covering letter together with the following accompanying plans and documents:

- Planning application form;
- Block and Location Plan (2404-P-700 Rev A);
- Existing Site Plan (2404-P-701 Rev A);
- Proposed Site Plan (2404-P-702 Rev A);
- Proposed Padel Court (2404-P-703 Rev A);

- Proposed padel Court Lighting Scheme (2404-P-705 Rev B);
- Proposed Padel Court 1 & 2 Elevations (2404-P-706 Rev A);
- Proposed Padel Court 3 Elevations (2404-P-707 Rev B);
- Proposed Cross Section 01 (2404-P-708 Rev A);
- Proposed Location Section 02 (2404-P-709 Rev B);
- Design and Access Statement;
- Noise Report.

Site and Surroundings

The application site is located in the south-eastern corner of Gatehouse Hub, a modern mixed-use commercial park comprising 19 units permitted for uses under Classes E(g), B2, and B8.

The site forms part of the curtilage of Unit 34, which is currently being converted into an indoor padel facility. The plot is broadly square in shape, measuring approximately 30 metres by 30 metres.

Immediately to the north of the site is Unit 46, which measures 14.5 metres in width and stands 7.4 metres high. This unit forms the southern end of a terrace of identical units extending northwards, each with parking spaces to the front.

To the west lies Unit 34, a larger building measuring 20 metres in width and rising to 9.8 metres at the ridge, with an overall length of 29.5 metres. In front of Unit 34, there are 18 parking spaces, including two disabled bays.

The southern boundary of the commercial park and application site, is defined by mature trees and vegetation, beyond which lies woodland and large overhead electricity poles and wires. The eastern boundary is similarly screened by trees, with open fields beyond.

Access to the site is via the internal road serving Gatehouse Hub, which connects to Gatehouse Lane to the north.

Proposed Development

It is proposed to re-purpose the approved service yard associated with Unit 34 to accommodate three outdoor padel courts. The layout will comprise two full-size courts positioned side by side, with a half-size court located to their southern side, set at a 90-degrees.

Minimal physical works are required to prepare the site, as the area is already surfaced with a hard porous material in accordance with the approved plans. The creation of the courts will primarily involve installing enclosures comprising fencing and glazed paneling.

Each court will be enclosed with metal mesh fencing, standing 3 metres high along the sides and rising to 4 metres at each end, wrapping around the first 2 metres of each side. At either end, toughened glass panels will be installed to a height of 3 metres, continuing for the first 2 metres along each side before reducing to 2 metres for the next 2 metres. The playing surfaces will be

finished with light blue matting, marked with white court lines. Gated access will be provided mid-way along each side.

Viewing benches will be positioned at regular intervals along the courts, complemented by landscaping and planting. Additional planting is proposed in the north-west corner near the parking area and along the eastern boundary, supplementing existing vegetation.

For evening use, LED floodlighting will be installed on 6-metre-high poles fixed to the fencing, with beams directed towards the courts. Each court will have four lighting poles.

The outdoor courts will operate alongside the indoor padel facility within Unit 34, in accordance with the approved hours for the wider commercial park.

Relevant Planning Policies

Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 sets out that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 38(3) states that the Development Plan includes the adopted Development Plan Documents (DPDs).

Material considerations include National Planning Guidance, and in particular the NPPF, together with supplementary planning documents adopted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA).

The approved Development Plan, in relation to this application, for the purposes of the Act, comprises the Mid Sussex District Plan, the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) and the 'made' Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan (2015).

Other material considerations relevant to the determination of this application include the Mid Sussex Design Guide.

Mid Sussex District Plan

The Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP) was adopted on 28th March 2018. It covers the period 2014 - 2031 and sets out a vision for how Mid Sussex wants to evolve and a delivery strategy for how that will be achieved.

The following policies are considered most relevant to these proposals:

- DP1: Sustainable Economic Development
- DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
- DP14: Sustainable Rural Development and the Rural Economy
- DP21: Transport
- DP24: Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Activities
- DP25: Community Facilities and Local Services
- DP26: Character and Design

- DP29: Noise, Air and Light Pollution
- DP38: Biodiversity

Site Allocations DPD

The Mid Sussex Site Allocations Development Plan Document was adopted on 29th June 2022. The Site Allocations DPD identifies sufficient housing sites to provide a five year housing land supply to 2031 and also makes sure that enough land is allocated to meet identified employment need. 5.7. The following policies are considered most relevant to these proposals:

- Policy SA34: Existing Employment Sites

Hurstpierpoint And Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan

The Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan (HSCNP) seeks to cover the plan period 2014 - 2031. The HSCNP was 'made' by the District Council in March 2015. It sets out the development principles and allocation of areas for future building and land use.

Policy HurstC1 is relevant to these proposals.

Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (paragraph 7). Paragraph 8 goes on to explain that "Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways": an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective.

Paragraph 10 states that, *"So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development."*

Paragraph 11 sets out that the application of sustainable development for decision-taking means:

- *Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Development Plan without delay; or*
- *where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date⁸, granting permission unless:*
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.*

Chapter 6 seeks to ensure planning policies and decisions help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. It states that significant weight should be placed on

the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

Chapter 8 relates to Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities and states that decisions should *“plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments”* (paragraph 98). It goes on to acknowledge that *“access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change”* (paragraph 103).

Chapter 9 relates to “Promoting Sustainable Transport”. It states 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, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios”* (paragraph 116).

Mid Sussex Design Guide

The Council has adopted a 'Mid Sussex Design Guide' Supplementary Planning Document (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 this planning application.

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 Consultation Draft

The District Council is currently in the process of reviewing and updating the District Plan. Upon adoption the new District Plan 2021 - 2039 will replace the current adopted District Plan. The draft District Plan 2021-2039 (Regulation 19) was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination on 8th July 2024 and a number of initial hearings were held in October 2024.

In April 2025 the Inspector wrote to the Council setting out her initial findings on the emerging District Plan. In her view the Council had failed in its duty to co-operate with neighbouring authority's during the preparation of the emerging plan. Accordingly she recommended that the Plan should be withdrawn from the examination.

However, following the Government's recent announcement that it plans to abolish the Duty to Cooperate requirement early next year it is understood that the examination will be re-commenced, albeit dates are yet to be confirmed.

While the policies of the emerging Local Plan are a material consideration, they currently carry limited weight in the determination of this application. The applicant acknowledges that the draft plan proposes allocating land surrounding the site for a mixed-use development, including residential uses. However, this allocation remains unconfirmed, and any detailed application for that land is a considerable way off.

Importantly, granting approval for this proposal would not prejudice future development opportunities on adjacent land. Any subsequent scheme could be appropriately designed and laid out to integrate with the existing site and its approved uses, ensuring a cohesive and well-planned environment.

In fact the leisure facilities on the site would benefit future residents if a proposal were to come forward allowing easy accessibility to sport and recreation.

Planning Considerations

The main issues in the determination of this application are:

- Principle of Development;
- Design and impact upon the character of the area;
- Impact upon the amenity of neighbouring occupiers; and
- Transport and parking.

Principle of Development

As set out through prior correspondence with the Council, it is our opinion that Unit 34 can lawfully operate as an indoor padel facility, as the change of use from Class E(g) to Class E(d) does not constitute development. The application site forms part of the curtilage of Unit 34 and is therefore considered part of the same planning unit. Consequently, the change of use extends naturally to the outdoor space, meaning the principle of use is established, and the only matter for consideration is the physical works required to deliver the courts.

Even if this interpretation were not accepted, the proposal represents a logical and policy-compliant extension of the approved use. It aligns with the District Plan's objectives, including Policy DP1 which promotes economic vitality and supports new businesses and growth; Policy DP24 which encourages development that provides or enhances leisure and cultural facilities; and Policy DP25 which supports provision of community facilities and services that contribute to sustainable communities.

Furthermore, Policy SA34 supports the intensification of existing uses within existing employment sites. While padel falls under Class E(d) rather than traditional employment classes, the facility is employment-generating, creating five full-time and five part-time roles, with no loss of employment floorspace. The proposal remains wholly within the commercial park boundary.

Accordingly, there is no policy basis for an in-principle objection.

Design and impact upon the character of the area

The courts will be enclosed by visually permeable wire mesh fencing and glazed panels, ensuring a low-impact design. Views from the north and west will be screened by existing commercial units, while views from the south and east are extremely limited due to woodland and vegetation, supplemented by additional planting along the eastern boundary.

In order allow safe use during darker hours floodlighting is proposed, designed in accordance with LTA Padel Guidelines.

Policy DP29 states that when considering lighting proposal the Local Authority will seek to ensure that the impact on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation areas is minimised in terms of intensity and number of fittings and seeks to ensure that good design is demonstrated including fittings to restrict emissions from proposed lighting schemes.

The proposed lighting will be directional, and positioned to contain illumination within the courts, with natural screening from adjacent buildings and vegetation further reducing any overspill.

Given the scale of surrounding development and the sensitive design approach, the proposal will have an acceptable and minimal impact on the character of the area.

Impact on neighbour amenity

The closest neighbouring residential properties are located well over 150 metres to the north of the application site the other side of the intervening commercial park. To the west, the closest neighbouring properties are set over 170 metres from the boundary of the commercial park with unit 34 screening any views from this direction. To the south west, the nearest residential properties are even further away with substantial intervening trees and woodland.

To the east the closest residential properties are also some distance away with intervention woodland screening any views of the site.

The proposals will therefore have no adverse impact on the amenities of any existing dwellings either as a consequence of light or noise disturbance given the intervening distances, buildings and vegetation.

To support this assessment the application is submitted with a Noise Report prepared by Acoustic South East. This confirms that any noise from the proposed padel courts will be comfortably below measured background noise levels as well as measured ambient levels.

As outlined above, the emerging Local Plan identifies the land surrounding Gatehouse Hub for a potential mixed-use allocation, incorporating residential development. In recognition of this prospective designation and the adjacent land uses, the applicant has undertaken an assessment of potential noise impacts on any future development to the east.

Given the intervening distance, existing vegetation, and the ability of future developers to incorporate appropriate design measures, it is considered that the proposed courts will not, in any way, compromise or prejudice this potential allocation. Nevertheless, to provide additional assurance, the applicant is prepared to install an acoustic fence along the eastern boundary should this be deemed necessary.

Transport and Parking

Unit 34 benefits from 18 parking spaces including disabled bays. This is more than sufficient to serve the proposed use in addition to Unit 34.

Summary and Conclusions

This application seeks consent for the installation of three outdoor padel courts within the curtilage of Unit 34 at Gatehouse Hub, complementing the existing indoor padel facility. The proposal represents a logical and policy-compliant enhancement to the site, delivering high-quality leisure provision within an established mixed use commercial park.

The principle of development is firmly supported. A change of use from Class E(g) to Class E(d) does not constitute development, and the outdoor courts form a natural extension of this lawful use. Even if this interpretation were not accepted, the proposal aligns with key policies of the

District Plan, including those promoting economic vitality (DP1), enhanced leisure facilities (DP24), and community infrastructure (DP25). The facility will generate employment and contribute to the local economy without any loss of traditional employment floorspace.

The design is low-impact and visually permeable, with views screened by existing buildings and vegetation. Additional planting and carefully designed lighting ensure compliance with Policy DP29, minimising visual and environmental impact. The courts will integrate seamlessly into the existing site and will not harm the character of the area.

Neighbouring amenity will remain unaffected. Residential properties are located at significant distances, with intervening buildings and woodland providing natural screening. A Noise Assessment confirms that sound levels will be acceptable, and lighting has been designed to minimise overspill.

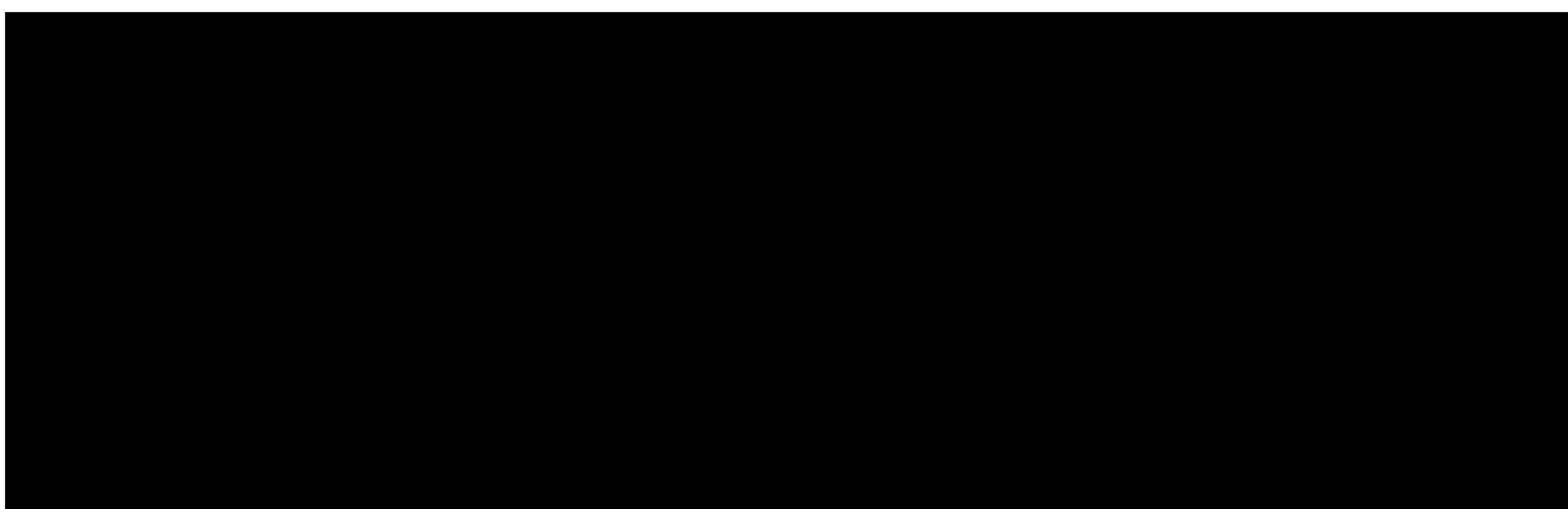
Transport and parking arrangements are acceptable, with ample parking provision.

In conclusion, the proposal delivers a high-quality recreational facility that supports health, wellbeing, and economic growth, while respecting local character and amenity. It is fully consistent with the objectives of the Development Plan and represents sustainable development.

For all the reasons outlined above, it is submitted that the scheme is acceptable and should be supported.

We trust that you have everything you need to be able to support the proposals. If however there is anything else that you require in order to assist your assessment of the proposals please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

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