

Submission objecting to the siting of padel courts

I live opposite the tennis courts on the second floor of Cavendish House, looking down directly at the existing tennis courts. Our windows are approximately 25 metres above the tennis court floor, so the rise in the earth embankment does not shield noise coming from that direction.

The whole complex is Grade II, so we are only allowed single glazed windows. The perimeter road referred to in the Plans as a "private road" is actually owned and maintained by Southdowns Park Management Company Ltd and St Francis Sports and Social Club have a right of way over some of the Southern part of it. The property referred to as "St Francis" has been Southdowns Park since the late 1990's, often referred to as the "jewel" in Haywards Heath having been constructed in the 1850's and a magnificent building known for its tranquility and outstanding gardens that are used extensively by its residents. None of the properties on the South side have their own gardens, so usage of the communal gardens is continuous. Our gazebo, used by many residents, is less than 30 metres from the front of the tennis courts.

On Tuesday the 1st of July in the morning I heard loud banging coming from the direction of the tennis courts and went down to investigate. I met Chris and Stuart Poole hitting a sheet of plastic and trying to take rudimentary sound readings on the banking leading up to our buildings.

We talked amicably about the impact of noise and light pollution from having courts so close to the housing. The Plans refer to the distance being over 100 metres, whereas, in fact, it has been measured accurately at 81.3 metres. The Padel Magazine recommends that courts should be more than 100 metres from residential buildings. Planning laws in many countries require a minimum distance of 100 metres including Holland and Turkey.

The Application is for a "temporary" 3 year use on the tennis courts. I understand from Stuart that the courts would then be moved down closer to the football field and the ground returned to being tennis courts. Does this make sense if it's likely to cause noise complaints from residents?

The Plans don't appear to provide players with toilets, changing rooms or showers which should be incorporated in a sports environment.

The Planning and Heritage Statement indicates:

- Point 2.3 indicates approximately 100 metres. It is 19 metres less than that at 81.3 metres.
- Point 3.3 shows the parking spaces alongside the courts. These are actually heavily utilised by the swimming pool.
- Point 4.11 Policy 4.8 states "*that there will be no unacceptable levels of light, noise, air or water pollution to the nearby residential properties*"; I would contend that there will be.
- Point 5.3 states "*the proposed scale is no greater than the existing fencing around the decrepit tennis courts*". The existing mesh fencing is 2.75 metres high whereas padel court walls are 4 metres high.
- Point 5.4 states "*The application site is proximate to Main Block of St Francis' Hospital - Grade II Listed*) is approximately 100 metres to the north of the site. The list entry confirms:..." and then go on to describe The St Francis Hospital which closed in the 1990's and was converted in residential with the first occupants moving in to Southdowns Park in 1998.

Noise has become the major issue with the siting of padel courts. I should mention that I play Padel regularly at David Lloyds (Wickwoods) and the Triangle Leisure Centre in Burgess Hill so I am definitely in favour of having padel courts locally as long as they do not create noise pollution.

You just have to do some online searches to see the problems that Padel noise is causing. These are highlights taken from recent press articles:

- A tennis club in Bath had a planning application to replace a tennis court with two padel courts rejected due to local residents' objections.
- Plans for the addition of three outdoor padel courts at the exclusive St. George's Hill Lawn Tennis Club in a private gated community in Surrey also had to be shelved due to numerous objections, many of which cited the fear of noise pollution.

- The upmarket Winchester Racquets and Fitness club recently informed its members that it expected to be served with a noise abatement notice after complaints from neighbours living in the homes in the surrounding area. They say they have been formally advised that notices will be served under section 80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990
- A club in Surrey shelved plans for three padel courts due to complaints about potential noise disturbance.
- Withdean Sports Centre closed its outdoor courts due to noise complaints and now will be housing new courts indoors
- Guildford councillors rejected plans for padel courts because the noise was considered "above and beyond" other sports
- A gym in Ashby withdrew its planning application after residents and the town council raised objections about "gun-shot" like noise
- A club in Winchester faced a noise abatement notice after complaints about the "aggressive hard-hitting shots".
- There are many more instances where clubs have faced noise abatements notices or been forced to modify operations due to complaints

The sources of noise relevant to this application are likely to come from:

1] Ball strikes - the impact of the ball against the racket, mesh walling, glass walls and floor produce sharp, percussive sounds. This is often described as "thudding" or "gun-fire" like noise. Two courts plus the training court multiplies the sound.

2] Player voices: players may shout, converse loudly, and react vocally whilst playing. If there are onlookers, additionally shouts of encouragement are normal.

3] The proposed outdoor refreshment area

Noise from padel courts will disrupt the tranquility of Southdowns Park. No opening times have been suggested but it is likely the operators will want to be open 7 days a week from early morning to late evening. Many of our residents are medical staff who work shifts at the hospital next door. It is vitally important for their ongoing health that they can sleep in peace, particularly when they are on night shifts and need to sleep during the day. We also have a high proportion of elderly residents to consider. Persistent or excessive noise can contribute to stress and a reduced quality of life for those exposed to it. The gardens and BBQ area are the back gardens for all our residents - we have 198 properties and can only use the communal gardens for our outside space. The central gazebo, which is in continual use, is less than 30 metres from the tennis courts. Opening a window for fresh air will only increase the



Caption

noise level in resident's accommodation.



Caption

The applicant has substantial alternative areas close to their football field that would cause less disturbance to the residents and would provide better parking facilities.

Noise Mitigation

Should the Council decide to approve the plans, wherever the courts may be sited, it is hoped that full consideration will be given to mitigating the disturbance to residents of Southdowns Park. These should include:

- 1] Using specialised laminated acoustic glass for court walls
- 2] Acoustic flooring
- 3] An external soundproofing wall between the courts and the private road
- 4] Limiting operating hours

SUMMARY

I OBJECT TO THE PLANNING APPLICATION DM/25/1185 ON THE GROUNDS OF NOISE. I AM IN FAVOUR OF ST FRANCIS SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB HAVING PADEL COURTS ERECTED CLOSE TO THEIR FOOTBALL GROUND AND CLUBHOUSE, WHICH IS AWAY FROM RESIDENTIAL UNITS.

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