

PROPOSED ESSENTIAL ADDITIONAL VEHICLE PARKING AT EAST GRINSTEAD SPORTS CLUB

DESIGN & ACCESS & PLANNING STATEMENT

EAST GRINSTEAD SPORTS CLUB
SAINT HILL ROAD
EAST GRINSTEAD
WEST SUSSEX
RH19 4JU

16th March 2026

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This Design & Access Statement has been prepared to accompany the Full Planning Application details for the formation of essential additional vehicle parking at The East Sports Club at Saint Hill Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 4JU.

Application Site & Context

The East Grinstead Sports Club (EGSC) is a multi-sport and leisure facility based at Saint Hill Road on the outskirts of East Grinstead.

Originally the land was purchased in 1959 and used by the Hockey Club following which in 1989 the cricket pitch was re-located from West Lane and this together with squash and the cricket used the facilities.

In 1992 a new clubhouse and artificial surface sports pitches were constructed.

In 1995 badminton courts were added to the facilities.

In 2002 Charity Status was granted to the Club

The following year the club house was extended, and a water-based hockey pitch was installed.

In 2007, 9 netball courts were provided

During 2008 the 2 existing squash courts were converted into an expanded gymnasium to accommodate members from the Dunnings Mill Squash and Leisure Club when that facility was sold for residential development.

During 2008, planning permission was granted to add 5 - squash courts, sports hall seating and club extension

Part of that consent was implemented during 2011, with the balance of that permission to be constructed when funds permit.

In 2015 approval was granted for improvements to the access facilities and additional parking.

During 2019 Flood lighting to the Hockey pitch was replaced with LED lamps

In 2020 former adjacent agricultural land was approved as a sports field for football. During 2021 approval was granted for the repositioning of a score board.

Padel or (Padel Tennis) had become an extremely popular sport almost as popular if not more than tennis. Planning Approval was granted for 4-padel tennis courts in 2024 which have been constructed and in use during 2025

Application submitted

The Approach

For some considerable time, vehicle parking at the Sports Club has been an issue. With the center being a multi-disciplined sports facility. There are numerous occasions when several sports facilities are being used at the same time, particularly evenings and at weekends, or when tournaments are taking place where there is just not enough parking space at the Centre.

To assist in the short term an application is to utilize a section of land adjacent to the hockey pitch which is the centers maintenance area and the majority of the access and area is already surfaced, however by grading and extending this area it will provide staff and overflow parking, in the short term.

It was noted within those application details that a further Full Planning application would be forthcoming to provide additional parking at the rear of the existing main car park area And the submitted details now cover that requirement.

Design

The site of this application is within an existing clearing surrounded by trees. In fact, I submitted a planning application on this parcel of land for the required additional parking back in 2014. However, the application had to be withdrawn as it transpired that that parcel of land was not in the ownership of the Sports Club, albeit extensive searches were carried out to ascertain who owned that land. It transpired that an elderly lady living in Scotland was the owner of the said parcel of land, and her dependents had notified the trustees of that fact.

Upon the death of the then owner her sons decided to donate the land to the club for which they were very grateful. Therefore, the land is now all within the title of the Sports Club. Whilst the parcel of land is enclosed within trees the access has been carefully considered to minimize removal of any trees. You will observe from the Tree Consultants' design details that the total number of trees requiring removal is 3 with another small group listed within the Tree Report.

Whilst nobody likes felling trees it must be noted that there are hundreds if not thousands of trees on this site and the removal of 3 must be considered against the gain this will provide to the local community using the Sports Centre

Surface of the parking area will be of a permeable material with drainage taken to the existing surface water drainage system.

Under Planning application requirements this application is subject to Biodiversity Net Gain requirements and the details as provided by the Ecologist will be followed

Layout

See details on Drawing No. **120226-01**

Scale

The increased area of the overflow and staff parking area is 0.373Ha.

Landscaping The area is currently grass surrounded with trees on all boundaries with the new access to this area formed by continuation of the existing roadway adjacent to the access roadway serving the main rear car park. A minimum removal of 3 trees, plus a small group (SEE TREE CONSULTANTS REPORT)

However, it will be observed from the requirements of the Biodiversity Condition (BNG) offsite landscaping will be provided to compensate for this loss.

Access

The existing main access off Saint Hill Road was upgraded several years ago and will provide adequate Access to the Sports Facilities.

New access into the parking area has been designed to allow vehicles to enter and access with ample room to pass each other.

Planning Policies Relevant to this Application:

Mid Sussex District Plan

DP 12 Protection and enhancement of the countryside

DP16 High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

DPI7 Ashdown Forest

DP21 Transport

DP24 Leisure and cultural facilities and activities

DP25 Community facilities and local services

DP29 Noise, air and light pollution.

East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan

Policy EGI Protection of the High Weald AONB

Policy EG2 Areas of Development Constraint

Policy EG3 Promoting Good Design

Policy EGIS Alternative Sports Provision

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

Within the Mid Sussex Local Plan, it seeks to encourage the provision of a wide range of opportunities for recreation.

To secure the provision of an appropriate local range of formal and informal sporting and recreational facilities to meet the needs of all age groups throughout the district.

To safeguard and make the most effective use of existing public and private sporting and recreational facilities in general, and outdoor playing spaces in particular.

To ensure that any new development and expansion of existing provision is made for the recreation needs arising from the development.

The Mid Sussex Local Plan accepts that there are deficiencies in existing sporting facilities and the Council will generally take a positive approach towards development proposals related to sport.

The site lies within 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 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 purpose 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 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.

Design 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.

Proposal 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 need for which clearly outweighs the loss."*

Policy DP25 of the District Plan states:

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

Where proposals involve the loss of a community facility, (including those facilities where loss would reduce the community's ability to meet 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 demonstrate the impact of the loss of facility; or*
- That the 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 produced by the District Council.

Policy DP16 in the District Plan states:

"Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as shown on the Policies Maps, will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB management Plan in particular;

- The identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting;
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- The traditional interaction of people with nature. And appropriate land management;
- Character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB;
- The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.

Small scale proposals which support the economy and social well-being of the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported.

Development land that contributes to the setting of the ANOB will only be permitted where it does not detract from visual qualities and essential characteristics of the ANOB, and in particular should not adversely affect the views into and out of the ANOB by virtue of its location or design".

Policy EGI in the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan States:

"Within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty planning permission will be refused for all major development proposals unless the development is demonstrably required in the public interest and meets the exceptional circumstances outlined in the NPPF.

Planning permission for other forms of development will be granted where the proposals are for the:

- (i) Conversion of redundant buildings
- (ii) Replacement on a like-for-like basis, of existing buildings; or
- (iii) Extension of an existing dwelling house relate to agricultural development or some other minor recreational use;

Provided that for each of the above {i, ii and iii) all the following criteria are met:

- The highest standards of Design are achieved;
- The natural and scenic beauty of the landscape is conserved or enhanced
- The proposals do not result in an obtrusive feature on the landscape.

The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate that the scheme would not negatively impact on the existing quality of the protected landscape and its setting taking account of locally important features. Proposals that have not fully considered and addressed the impact on the AONB will normally be refused.

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 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 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 separate identity and character of towns and villages;

Does not cause significant harm to amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking into account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see PolicyDP27)

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 buildings design;

Take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (unit 300+ unit) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed use element;

Optimizes the potential of the site to accommodate development."

EG 3 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan states:

"Planning permission will normally be granted where development proposals meet the following criteria:

- a) The form of the proposed development is proportionate and in keeping with scale, height, materials and site coverage of the surrounding area;*
- b) The layout of the proposed development respects the topography and character of the site, protects important landscape features and does not harm adjoining amenity;*
- c) The proposal does not result in the loss of buildings or spaces that would have an unacceptable impact on the character of the area;*
- d) The proposal ensures satisfactory means of access for vehicles and pedestrians and provides adequate parking, cycle storage and refuse facilities on site;*
- e) The design of new buildings and the layout of spaces, including footways, car and cycle parking areas, should be permeable and provide connectivity with neighboring areas;*
- f) New development must be inclusive and where appropriate make satisfactory provision for the safe and easy access for those with mobility impairment; and*
- g) The design of new developments must result in the creation of a safe and secure environment and incorporate adequate measures and features to deter crime, fear of crime, disorder and anti-social behavior; and*
- h) Proposals make provision for green infrastructure and biodiversity*
- i) Enhancement*
- j)*

Policies DP26 & DP27 of the Mid Sussex District Plan:

These policies deal with neighbouring amenity in relation to overlooking, loss of privacy, reduction in sunlight and daylight, loss of outlook and noise and light pollution

Currently with the lack of parking space, vehicles are constantly searching for space hence considerable extra noise and pollution than necessary. This additional area in the short term will assist alleviating that issue until further parking is made available and this will form the subject of a fresh Full Planning application

Highways Consideration

No change to the access onto Saint Hill Road, but improved internal parking facilities

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

The NPPF sets out government policy in order to ensure that the planning system contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 sets out the three overarching objectives economic, social and environmental. This means ensuring sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth; supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided; fostering a well-designed and safe environment; contributing to protecting and enhancing the natural built and historic environment; and using natural resources prudently. An overall objective of a national policy is *significantly boosting the supply of homes*.

Paragraphs 10 and 11 apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 11 states:

"For decision-taking this means:

- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan*
- d) without delay; or*

e) where there are no relevant plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- i. The application policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear 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."*

However, paragraph 12 makes clear that:

"The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.

Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicated that the plan should not be followed."

Paragraph 15 states:

The planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings."

With specific reference to decision-taking, the document provides the following advice:

Paragraph 38 states that: local Planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed developments in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible."

Paragraph 39 states: Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.

Paragraph 47 states: *"Planning Law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless longer period has been agreed in writing by the applicant in writing".*

National Planning Policy Guidance.

Conclusion:

The lack of parking space at this multi-facility sports complex causes considerable concern and the Trustees are anxious to provide a solution, and this otherwise wasted area of land will assist in the short term

Therefore, with respect it is requested that planning approval is granted for this application following the normal consultation period.

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