

Delegated Decision

Sign off Sheet

Ref. No:	DM/26/0051	Case Officer:	Susan Dubberley
Application Type:	Full Application		
Proposal:	Proposed creation of three outdoor padel tennis courts.		
Site:	Unit 34, Gatehouse Hub, Neaves Park, Goddards Green, Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 9ZN,		
Validation Date	8 Jan 2026	Overall Expiry Date:	11 Feb 2026
Pre-Commencement Conditions Required:		Pre-Com Conditions Date Agreed:	
Recommendation:	Permission	Recommendation Date:	16 Mar 2026
Target Date:	5 Mar 2026	Recommending Officer Signature:	<i>Susan Dubberley</i>

Date Legal Agreement Completed: (if applicable)		No of Representations:	66
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Signed and Agreed By:	<i>Steven King</i>	Date:	16 Mar 2026
Comments:			

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

DM/26/0051

Unit 34, Gatehouse Hub, Neaves Park, Goddards Green, Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 9ZN

Proposed creation of three outdoor padel tennis courts.

Mr B Ellis

LETTERS OF REPRESENTATION

67 letters of support for received:

- o Padel is a hugely popular sport and helps keep me active.
- o Great for health and the community.
- o Padel is the fastest growing sport in the world and demand for the sport in the Burgess Hill area far exceeds the number of available courts. Padel is a highly social and inclusive physical activity.
- o With only one court which has seen better days in Burgess Hill this opportunity to expand a fast growing sport would be welcomed.
- o Padel is such a great sport for all ages. Low threshold for entry allows everyone have unbelievable fun from first time.
- o This would be a fantastic addition to the community and promotes social, mental and physical wellbeing.
- o Padel is enjoyable, accessible (at the right price) and responsible for getting more middle age men and women active than any other sport.
- o It is likely to be an Olympic sport over the next few cycles also, such is the growth of the sport across the world
- o A lovely setting away from residential housing will be excellent.
- o Will be providing a kids padel court and coaching on a pay and play basis. This is an excellent idea and it will positively contribute to the sporting offer in Burgess Hill.
- o We need more Padel courts in Mid Sussex if only to drive down the per hour cost some operators are looking to levy. The game can then be more accessible to local players.

One letter of objection:

- o Concerned over increased traffic that this proposed development will have in Gatehouse Lane.
- o Gatehouse Lane has been designated by the Council as a recreational area. This road is used as a recreational route for many local residents who walk along this road and then into High Hatch Lane and Danworth Lane, connecting with the various footpaths and bridleways along both roads. There are no pavements along any of these roads.
- o The development of the new Industrial units at Gatehouse Hub has already resulted in a significant increase in traffic along this road. There are no speed restrictions along Gatehouse Lane and this has made this a potentially lethal leisure route. The addition of 3 more Padel Courts will potentially mean at least a further 12 cars driving along this stretch of road each hour.
- o Additionally, there are already 2 inside padel courts. a gym and cafe within Unit 34. The allocation of 18 car parking spaces is therefore woefully inadequate. If this shortfall of car parking spaces results in cars being parked on the road outside of the business park that will only create an extra hazard for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Parish Council:

Our recommendation is that MSDC should give permission.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTEES

WSCC Highway Authority: No objection

Environmental Health (protection): No objection

INTRODUCTION

The application seeks planning permission for the proposed creation of three outdoor padel tennis courts.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

DM/24/2482 - Proposed relocation of previously approved Wellness Centre (Class E(d) and extension of existing mixed commercial park to provide 1,640sqm of additional employment floor space for class E(g), B2 or B8 uses. Approved on 4th July 2025.

DM/23/1051 - full planning permission, for a proposed mixed used commercial park including a wellness centre Class E(d) and 19 units for Class E(g), B2 or B8 use. Approved on 14th August 2023.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The courts would be located in the far south-eastern corner of the recently redeveloped employment site, formerly Farmers Stores, now known as Gatehouse Hub. Planning permission was granted for the redevelopment of the site in 2023 for 19 new units for Class E(g), B2 or B8 uses and a wellness centre Class E(d). The redevelopment of the commercial units has been completed with most units occupied. The site where the courts would be located was original to be part of the service yard for unit 34 which is immediately to the west of the site.

To the east of the access from Gatehouse Lane there are two residential properties, Little Shepherd and Twin Oaks. The garden of Little Shepherd runs the length of the access drive. To the west there is open land and to the south of the site there is woodland.

The site is located in the countryside and is allocated as an existing employment site in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (Sites DPD).

APPLICATION DETAILS

The application seeks planning permission for the proposed creation of three outdoor padel tennis courts. The courts would be sited in the south-eastern corner of the industrial site in an area which was originally to be part of the service yard for unit 34 to the west of the site. Access to the site is via the internal road serving Gatehouse Hub, which then connects to Gatehouse Lane to the north.

The plans show that the proposal is for two double courts and one singles court, with the area for the 2 double courts being some 400m² combined and the single court area some 114m². The courts would be enclosed with a combination of metal mesh fencing and toughened glass panels with varying heights of between some 3m to a maximum of 4m. The playing surfaces will be finished with light blue matting, marked with white court lines. Gated access will be provided midway along each side of the courts and viewing benches are proposed at regular intervals along the outside of the courts, along with landscaping and planting. Additional planting is proposed in the north-west corner near the parking area and along the eastern boundary.

LED floodlighting will also be installed on 6-metre-high poles fixed to the fencing, with each court having four lighting poles. The outdoor courts would operate in accordance with the approved hours for the wider commercial park which are 0700 to 2300 hours on any day.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LIST OF POLICIES

Planning legislation holds that the determination of a planning application shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Using this as the starting point the development plan for this part of Mid Sussex consists of the District Plan, the Mid Sussex Site Allocations DPD and the Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan.

National policy (which is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance) does not form part of the development plan, but is an important material consideration.

Mid Sussex District Plan

The District Plan was adopted at Full Council on 28th March 2018.

Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside

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

Policy DP38: Biodiversity

Site Allocations Development Plan Document

The SADPD was adopted on 29th June 2022. It allocates sufficient housing and employment land to meet identified needs to 2031.

There are no relevant policies.

The Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan (adopted March 2015)

POLICY Countryside HurstC1 Conserving and enhancing character.

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) is currently at Examination and stage 1 hearings were concluded on the 31st October 2024. There are unresolved objections to some of the Policies in the draft District Plan and 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.

Relevant policies:

DPS6: Health and Wellbeing

DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain

DPB1: Character and Design

DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside

DPE8: Sustainable Rural Development and the Rural Economy

DPN7: Noise Impacts

DPI16: Community and Cultural Facilities and Local Services

Mid Sussex Design Guide

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.

NATIONAL POLICY

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024 is also a material consideration.

ASSESSMENT

Principle of development

Policy DP12 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states (in part):

'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 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states (in part):

'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.'

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:

- o that the use is no longer viable; or*
- o that there is an existing duplicate facility in the locality which can accommodate the impact of the loss of the facility; or*
- o 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.'

It is considered that as a matter of principle, policies DP24 and DP25 both provide support for the proposals as the padel tennis courts would be considered as improved or enhanced leisure and community facilities, in addition it is considered that the proposal would accord with policy DP12 as the proposal is supported by a 'specific policy reference' elsewhere in the Plan.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in terms of its principle.

Design and impact on character of area

As the application site lies within the countryside, planning policies state that there is an overriding need to ensure that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside is recognised, and that development should contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment. The aim of protecting the character of an area is found in the NPPF at para 187 where it states that planning policies and decisions should recognise *'the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services - including the economic and other benefits'*. This stance is reflected under policy DP12 of the District Plan which states that *'development will be permitted in the countryside, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District.'*

Policy DP26 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. 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.'*

While DP12 seeks to protect and enhance the countryside and Policy Countryside HurstC1 has a similar ethos.

In this case while the site located in the countryside, it is relevant that courts would not be located in an isolated countryside location but would be located on an industrial site and will therefore be viewed in the context of the existing development around it. It is also relevant that the structure of the courts is such that the boundary treatment proposed, mesh fencing and toughened glass panels would have a lightweight appearance.

The statement submitted with the application states that 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.

In view of the above it is considered that the design of the courts is acceptable in terms of character and appearance and visual impact, and that there would be no significant adverse detrimental impact on the countryside as a result of the development.

The proposal is therefore considered to comply with policies DP12, DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, Policy Countryside HurstC1 of the neighbourhood plan and the requirements of the NPPF.

Neighbouring Amenities

Policy DP26 in part seeks to ensure that development:

'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);'

Furthermore, DP29 of the Mid Sussex District Plan sets out the following relation to noise:

'Noise sensitive development, such as residential, will not be permitted in close proximity to existing or proposed development generating high levels of noise unless adequate sound insulation measures, as supported by a noise assessment are incorporated within the development.'

While in relation to light pollution DP29 in part states:

'The impact on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation areas of artificial lighting proposals (including floodlighting) is minimised, in terms of intensity and number of fittings; o The applicant can demonstrate good design including fittings to restrict emissions from proposed lighting schemes;'

In this case the nearest residential property is Little Shepherds with its rear garden boundary located well over 135 metres to the north of the application site and the house itself over 200m away. To the east and south there is open land and to the west the site would be screened by unit 34.

Environmental Health had been consulted on the application and have reviewed the acoustic report submitted with the application and have raised no objection commenting:

'The application for the 3 padel courts states that the hours of use will be limited to 0700-2300 on every and any day. The noise assessment included a daytime assessment of the noise impact on the 4 closest residential properties to the north-east, north-west and west of the proposed site location. I am satisfied that the noise impact on these properties from the use of the courts, even when all 3 are being used simultaneously, will be low and below that of an adverse impact. I therefore have no objection to this proposal.'

In view of the above and due to the distance to the nearest neighbour, it is considered that the proposal would not cause any significant harm to the amenities of nearby residents including taking into account of overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of daylight and sunlight, noise, air and light pollution and a loss of outlook.

The proposal is therefore, considered to comply with the above-mentioned part of policies DP26 and DP29 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

Highways Access and Parking

Policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan relates to transport and requires development to be sustainably located to minimise the need for travel and provide adequate car parking taking into account the accessibility of the development, the type, mix and use of the development and the availability and opportunities for public transport. Schemes should avoid severe additional traffic congestion and should protect the safety of road users and pedestrians.

The objections regarding the potential impact the proposed development will have due to an increase in traffic on Gatehouse Lane and potential overspill parking in the lane are noted. However, WSCC as the Local Highway Authority have reviewed the application and have raised no objection commenting:

'The vehicle access that will serve the tennis courts has been upgraded as part of the 2023 proposals to a 6.5m wide carriageway, meeting LHA standards, this is supported by a 2m wide footway link. The new junction will replace the existing access therefore acting as a replacement junction. Previously the LHA has accepted this access strategy and visibility splays.'

16 parking spaces and 2 disabled spaces will be provided to serve the tennis courts. In terms of traffic movements, the proposals are unlikely to result in any significant increase over and above what has been permitted previously. It is possible that future residents at the site will utilise the facility and will be able to access it sustainably.'

Conclusion

Having regard for the recent planning history at the site the LHA would not raise an objection to the proposals.'

In view of the above it is considered that, there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal, and the proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

Ashdown Forest

Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the 'Habitats Regulations'), the competent authority - in this case, Mid Sussex District Council - has a duty to ensure that any plans or projects that they regulate (including plan making and determining planning applications) will have no adverse effect on the integrity of a European site of nature conservation importance. The European site of focus is the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The potential effects of development on Ashdown Forest were assessed during the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process for the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031. This process identified likely significant effects on the Ashdown Forest SPA from recreational disturbance and on the Ashdown Forest SAC from atmospheric pollution.

A Habitats Regulations Assessment has been undertaken for the proposed development in this planning application.

Recreational disturbance

Increased recreational activity arising from new residential development and related population growth is likely to disturb the protected near-ground and ground nesting birds on Ashdown Forest.

In accordance with advice from Natural England, the HRA for the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031, and as detailed in District Plan Policy DP17, mitigation measures are necessary to counteract the effects of a potential increase in recreational pressure and are required for developments resulting in a net increase in dwellings within a 7km zone of influence around the Ashdown Forest SPA. A Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) mitigation approach has been developed. This mitigation approach has been agreed with Natural England.

This planning application does not result in a net increase in dwellings within the 7km zone of influence and so **mitigation is not required**.

Atmospheric pollution

Increased traffic emissions as a consequence of new development may result in additional atmospheric pollution on Ashdown Forest. The main pollutant effects of interest are acid deposition and eutrophication by nitrogen deposition. High levels of nitrogen may detrimentally affect the composition of an ecosystem and lead to loss of species.

The potential effects of the proposed development are incorporated into the overall results of the transport model prepared for the Mid Sussex Transport Study, which indicates there would not be an overall impact on Ashdown Forest. This means that there is not considered to be a significant in combination effect on the Ashdown Forest SAC by this development proposal.

Conclusion of the Habitats Regulations Assessment

The Habitats Regulations Assessment concludes that there would be no likely significant effects, alone or in combination, on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC from the proposed development.

No mitigation is required in relation to the Ashdown Forest SPA or SAC.

A full HRA (that is, the appropriate assessment stage that ascertains the effect on integrity of the European site) of the proposed development is not required.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This development is however exempt from the requirement to provide biodiversity net gain as the development does not impact on an onsite priority habitat, and it falls below the de-minimis threshold. Therefore, under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain as this application comprises development below the de-minimis threshold the development is exempt from providing biodiversity net gain.

CONCLUSION

Planning legislation requires the application to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is therefore necessary for the planning application to be assessed against the policies in the development plan and then to take account of other material planning considerations including the NPPF.

In conclusion, the proposal is considered to acceptable in principle, the proposed padel tennis courts are considered to be appropriate in terms of design, size and scale and will not cause harm to the surrounding countryside and would not cause unacceptable harm to the amenities of neighbouring properties. Furthermore, the proposal is also considered acceptable in relation to highways, access and parking. There will be no likely significant effect on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC and the impact on the Ashdown Forest.

Therefore, the proposal complies with Mid Sussex District Plan policies DP12, DP21, DP24, DP25, DP26, DP29, and DP38, policy Countryside HurstC1 of the neighbourhood plan and the requirements of the NPPF.

Decision: Permission

Case Officer: Susan Dubberley