

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 15 September 2025 14:24:56 UTC+01:00
To: "Stefan Galyas" <Stefan.Galyas@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/25/1185 St Francis Sports and Social Club

Hi Stefan

Comments on the above planning application.

The St Francis Sports and Social Club is located to the south-eastern side of Southdowns Park, which is the former County Lunatic Asylum, also known as St Francis Hospital.

Southdowns Park is a substantial mid 19th century Grade II listed building in the Lombardo-Venetian style, and is a symmetrical composition of a shallow U shape centred to its south-eastern side on a gabled element with flanking towers, wings extending to the south-west and north-east, and terminating single storey wings protruding to the south-east. To the south-eastern side the building is set in contemporaneous formal gardens which were set out to reflect the symmetry of the building, and which include surviving terracing, steps, pathways and curtilage listed pavilion buildings, designed to allow patients to enjoy fresh air and exercise. Due to the building's elevated position its south-eastern side and the adjoining gardens have panoramic views across the countryside to the south-east towards the distant Downs. Both the immediate garden setting and the wider rural views in my opinion contribute positively to the special interest of the listed building and how this is appreciated, in particular to its historical illustrative value, in the way in which these aspects relate to the ethos and medical practice of the former mental hospital, and its aesthetic value.

The Sports and Social Club consists of a swimming pool building, tennis courts and bowls green (all adjacent to the south eastern boundary of the gardens to Southdowns Park), with further down the hill football pitches and a club house.

The current proposal relates to the site of the tennis courts and is for a temporary (3 year) permission to install 3 padel courts in their place, with associated fencing and lighting, as well as new step access, hard landscaping and structures including a covered entranceway, and a covered seating area.

In my opinion, the proposal raises concerns in terms of the impact on the setting of and outlook from Southdowns Park, including from the building itself and from the formal gardens described above. My concern is that notwithstanding the existing tennis courts the scale and nature of the development may detract from the existing semi-rural outlook of the listed building and its gardens, by introducing further fencing (some of it solid) and built structures, alongside further hard landscaping in place of existing grassed areas. The proposed lighting around the courts will also have a visual impact, particularly at night when it is illuminated, but also during the daytime due to the number

and height of the lighting columns. This adverse impact may be exacerbated by the location of the courts directly in front of the central element of the south-eastern elevation of the building, which is also the principal central axis of the formal gardens, including one of the three curtilage listed pavilions, which is in close proximity to the courts.

The proposed padel courts appear to involve a second line of partly higher fencing set within the line of the existing fencing around the tennis courts, part of which will consist of panels of what appears from the submitted CGI images to be a solid material. However, it is not currently clear whether the existing fencing around the courts, which is not in good condition, is to be retained or replaced, nor do we have full details of the materials proposed. It would be helpful if we could be provided with a more detailed existing site plan, plus existing elevations for comparison, and if the proposed plans which, have been submitted could be amended to include details of materials to the fencing and to the new areas of hard surfacing and the proposed new structures within the site (entrance structure and covered seating). This further information will allow a fully informed assessment of the visual impact of the proposals on the setting of Southdowns Park.

I also note that there are continuing concerns regarding the potential noise impact of the proposal on residents of Southdowns Park- I would want to be re-assured that in light of these concerns no further fencing e.g. acoustic fencing will be required.

I will be able to provide further comments on receipt of this further information.

Thanks,

Emily

Please note that this advice is given at Officer level only and is without prejudice to the formal decision of the District Council.

Submit your planning application online.
<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk>

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