

From: planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk <planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 09 September 2025 22:15:11 UTC+01:00
To: "Stefan Galyas" <stefan.galyas@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: Mid Sussex DC - Online Register - Comments for Planning Application
DM/25/1185

Comments summary

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Application comments have been made. A summary of the comments is provided below.

Comments were submitted at 09/09/2025 10:15 PM.

Application Summary

Address:	Tennis Courts At St Francis Sports And Social Club Colwell Road Haywards Heath West Sussex RH16 4EZ
Proposal:	Temporary (36 months) permission for change of use of existing tennis courts to padel courts and associated works (Acoustic report received 21.08.2025)
Case Officer:	Stefan Galyas

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Customer Details

Address: 3 Park East Southdowns Park Haywards Heath

Comments Details

Commenter Type:	Neighbour or general public
Stance:	Customer objects to the Planning Application
Reasons for comment:	
Comments:	I am writing to object to the proposed redevelopment of the tennis courts near Southdowns Park into padel courts. While I believe deeply in enriching communal spaces and encouraging an active lifestyle, the proposal to put padel courts in this location feels unreasonable and inappropriate. I make my objections on the following 5 grounds:

1) Noise

Padel is a very loud sport, with each impact compared to a gunshot or a slamming door in terms of volume and sharpness. A single instance of this sound might not be particularly disturbing, but continuous repetitions of this level and type of noise every single day for hours will be a noticeable disturbance for those living in the area.

Recommendations internationally state that padel courts should not be built within 100m of residences, and the noise report states that our south-facing side is 81m away from the padel courts. Padel courts have been banned and planning requests to have them built have been rejected in areas such as Guildford and Bath for being too noisy for residential areas.

Multiple comments, including from the Environmental Health Officer and a former RICS surveyor, suggest that the sound readings were taken from a location and elevation that most reduced the noise from the courts, and that the noise experienced from the first and second floors was not taken into account. As someone living on the second floor on the south-facing side of the building, I have a clear line of sight (and therefore of sound) to the existing tennis courts with empty air between me and the noise. I can clearly hear the rugby/football matches that are played during autumn/winter weekends, and while it is disturbing, it is limited to a few hours on limited days throughout the year. It therefore seems likely that residents facing south would be significantly disturbed by much closer, much louder noises occurring persistently for many hours of every single day.

As Grade II listed building, we are limited to single-glazed windows, so can put nothing in place ourselves to protect ourselves against the noise - we are entirely reliant upon the soundproofing of the padel courts, which from current plans sounds insufficient.

It's concerning that the Environmental Health Officer has commented twice with concerns about the noise impact. I know that another noise report has been published since the EHO concerns, but there hasn't been a response from the EHO since suggesting that these are acceptable readings. In fact, this second report seems to show that Southdowns Park measured noise levels from 7am-10pm which exceeded the World Health Organisation's limit of 55db for outdoor areas where people spend their time. It also says that there are plans to use a ball machine, which increases volume, and that background music is not currently in the plan, but does not rule out background music being played in the future, which will add to the noise disturbance.

The noise report says that an email/phone contact will be made available for noise-related complaints with a 24-hour response time, but it is not clear what actions will be taken beyond

acknowledgement nor how fast action would be taken. It is understandably difficult to manage noise created by many different members of the public, and I believe that it would result in many noise complaints being put in to the Council.

2) Time

Many objections comment that the proposed padel courts will be open from 8am-10pm every single day - but I actually see that the original noise report states that the hours are set to be from 6am-10pm. This feels an unreasonable timeframe to allow such a noisy sport to take place, as it means that not only will there be disturbing sound during the day and evening but also at times people are often asleep. We also have many hospital staff living at Southdowns Park, many of whom work night shifts and need to sleep during the day, so this could potentially even have impacts on the local healthcare service.

It is also unclear whether professional staff are expected to be on site for the entire 6am-10pm opening hours to manage the access, noise and (possibly) behaviour of users of the padel courts. Many of us live here because Southdowns Park feels safe and secure, and encouraging non-residents to be on-site early in the morning and late in the evening, especially if there isn't an on-site manager, might impact our sense of security.

The proposal is stated as a temporary 3-year redevelopment ahead of moving them down to the sports field. It feels unlikely that after such expensive and specialised redevelopment that the courts would actually be moved, meaning that this might end up being a permanent change. It would seem more appropriate to wait and try to bring plans forward for building these courts on a more appropriate site.

3) Lighting

Extra lighting at this otherwise quite dark site would be a disturbance and would stand out in the line of sight of those with south-facing windows, especially at the height and angle suggested in the report.

The lux level described is equivalent to having an office building on full lighting up till 10pm, which feels unreasonable.

4) Parking

The original application form seems ambiguous about the parking spaces intended for the padel courts - it suggests that the existing parking spaces are to be used for the padel courts but also indicate that there would be a change in number of parking spaces by 8. However, it is not clear if that is meant to represent the existing 8 spaces or if there is an intention to build more. The

8 spaces that are currently there are in constant use by the swimming pool and so would not be able to cater to the significantly increased number of sports users the padel courts would bring.

The other parking adjacent to the padel courts is private parking for residents and guests of Southdowns Park, but sports users already often park there without a parking permit, and this would seem only likely to increase with the use of the padel courts.

5) Roadways

We have narrow roadways, often with pedestrians walking tightly alongside them, many of whom are elderly, children or dogwalkers. The padel courts are proposed to be put in place as padel is a popular sport. Therefore, we can expect a significant increase in the number of vehicles coming along

Our roadways around Southdowns Park are paid for and maintained as part of our services charges and are being detrimentally impacted already by the use of vehicles for other sports clubs who come in via the Colwell Road entrance rather than going round the back way. I think it's particularly important to note that we cannot block non-residents/visitors from entering via this roadway due to it being an emergency roadway used by the hospital. Therefore, an increased use in these roads is not only unfair on those of us who pay for their upkeep but also may end up putting hospital access at risk, especially if people start parking up on the roads to avoid parking issues closer to the courts.

Summary

I believe in creating opportunities for the community and would love to see vibrant padel courts available near Haywards Heath, but I do not believe that this site is the right one, being so close to residences and without sufficient soundproofing and infrastructure management plans in place. I would urge the Council to reject this application and to work with the applicant to find a more suitable site that benefits everyone.

Kind regards