



UNION4 PLANNING

Padel Centric Ltd

Land to the south of Crabbet Park, Crawley Down

Construction of a padel tennis facility (Use Class E(d)) with ancillary offices, changing facilities and studio, member shop and café (all within Use Class E), car and cycle parking, bin storage, with associated access and works.

PLANNING STATEMENT

September 2026



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Document Control

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Union4 Planning on behalf of Padel Centric Ltd ('the Applicant') and forms part of a full planning application which proposes development of a padel tennis facility on land to the south of Crabbet Park, Crawley Down. The application is submitted to Mid Sussex District Council as the local planning authority.
- 1.2 The proposed development comprises construction of a padel tennis facility (Use Class E(d)) with ancillary office, changing facilities and warmup studio, business centre, member shop and café (all within Use Class E), car and cycle parking, bin storage, with associated access and works.
- 1.3 The introduction of padel tennis; an innovative racquet sport; to the site is intended to cater for one of the fastest growing sports in the UK. The proposed development will provide a modern facility that will introduce new people to the game, complementing and enhancing the existing offer of sporting facilities in and around the Crawley area.
- 1.4 This development would be the closest padel tennis facility serving Crawley Town Centre to the west. The proposal would provide a significant contribution to Crawley and the wider Mid Sussex area by providing a new sporting facility that can be utilised at all times of the year.
- 1.5 Prior to submission of the full planning application, the applicant submitted a package seeking pre-application advice from the Council on matters of planning and acoustics. A submission was also made to West Sussex County Council (WSCC) in respect to highways matters. The first pre-application response stated the Site lies within the open countryside, however in the intervening time, the Mid Sussex Local Plan has progressed to site allocations hearings, with the result being that the site immediately to the south of the application Site, forming part of a much larger site, is due to be allocated under Policy DPSC2 for strategic development.
- 1.6 This leaves the application Site lying between the allocated Built-Up area covering the wider Crabbet Park leisure site and the allocated land. It would not therefore be open countryside. This is set out in greater detail in Section 6 below.

Application Documents

- 1.7 In addition to this Planning Statement, the planning application includes the following:
 - Application Form and Certificates
 - Covering Letter
 - Planning Drawings
 - Application Fee
- 1.8 The planning application is also supported by the following documents:

- Design and Access Statement – prepared by Gavin Jones Architecture Limited
- Transport Statement – prepared by Crosby Transport Planning
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment – prepared by Arbtech
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment with Metric Tool – prepared by Arbtech
- Completed BNG Statement – prepared by Arbtech
- Noise Impact Assessment – prepared by DG Acoustics
- Arboricultural Report – prepared by Arb Consultancy Limited
- Foul Sewage and Drainage Assessment – prepared by RIDGE
- Ventilation and Extraction Statement – prepared by DG Acoustics and Union4 Planning
- Sequential Test and Impact Assessment – prepared by Union4 Planning

Structure of this Planning Statement

- 1.9 This Planning Statement provides a comprehensive overview of the proposed development and includes an assessment of the proposals against the relevant planning policies and guidance.
- 1.10 This Planning Statement is structured as follows:
- Section 2 provides an overview of the site's location and description
 - Section 3 provides an overview of the planning history
 - Section 4 describes the proposed development
 - Section 5 sets out the policy context pertaining to the site
 - Section 6 outlines the key planning and environmental considerations; and
 - Section 7 provides a summary and conclusions.

2.0 Site Location and Context

- 2.1 At set out in the Introduction, the application site ('the Site') is located adjacent to and **soon to be** within the Built-Up area in the north-western extent of Mid Sussex. More specifically, the site is positioned to the east of the M23 motorway, and directly to the south of the Crabbet Park leisure cluster area. It lies immediately to the east of the wider Crawley area.

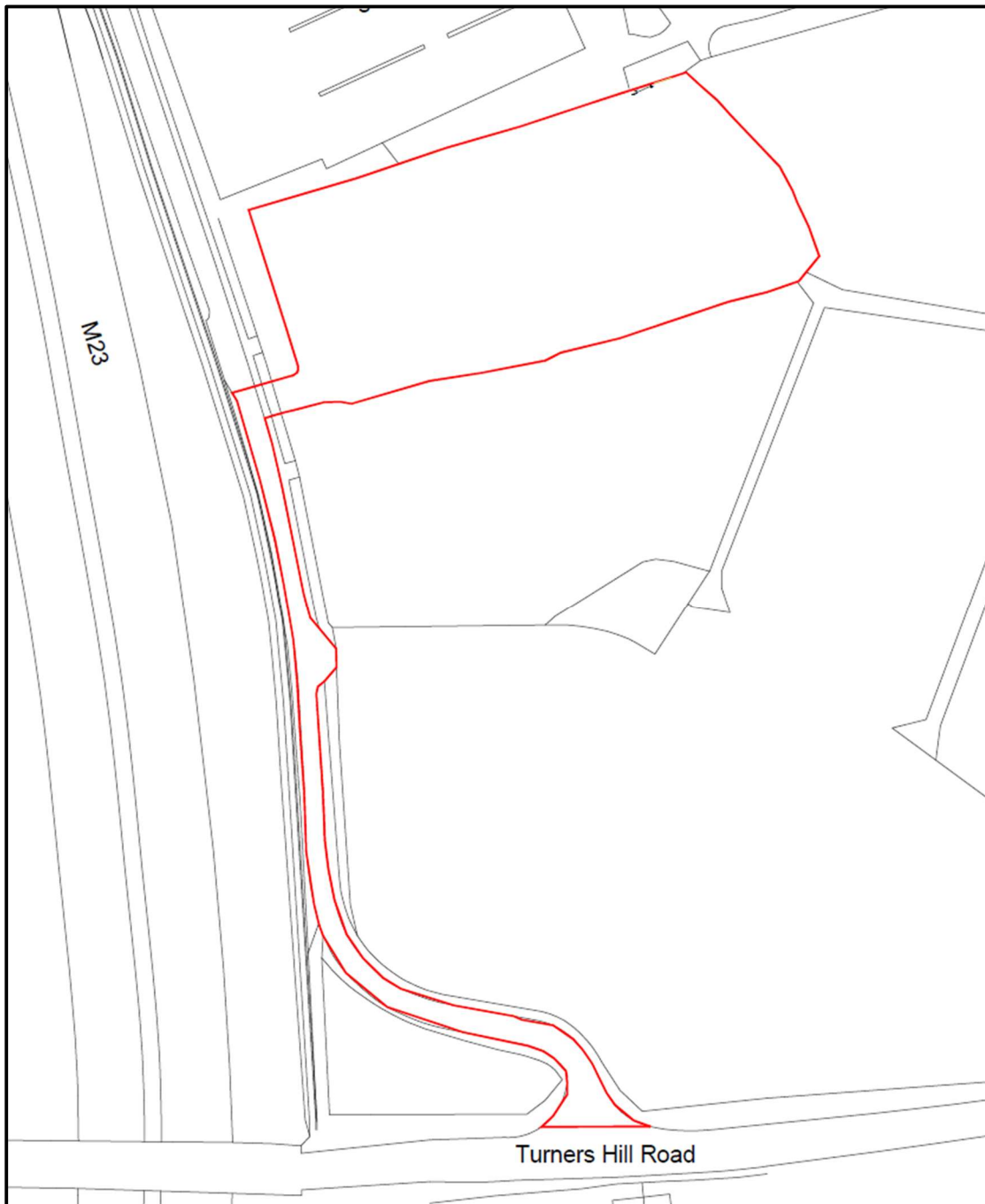
Figure 1: Site Location and Context



Source: Google Maps (2025); annotated by Union4 Planning

- 2.2 The Site comprises an area of approximately 0.7 hectares, consisting of a grazing paddock and private access track up to the adopted Highway (Turners Hill Road). The Site is bounded by fencing to the north, separating the car parking area serving Crabbet Park. The site is also bounded by fencing to the south, hedgerow to the west and established tree canopy to the east.
- 2.3 There is no direct vehicular access to the site from the private access road. An agricultural access is provided via the adjacent Nuffield Health and Fitness Centre and Holiday Inn hotel developments which are accessed via a priority junction some 100m to the north of the application site.
- 2.4 The red line boundary for the Site is indicated below in Figure 2 overleaf.

Figure 2: Red-Line Boundary



Source: Gavin Jones Architecture (2025)

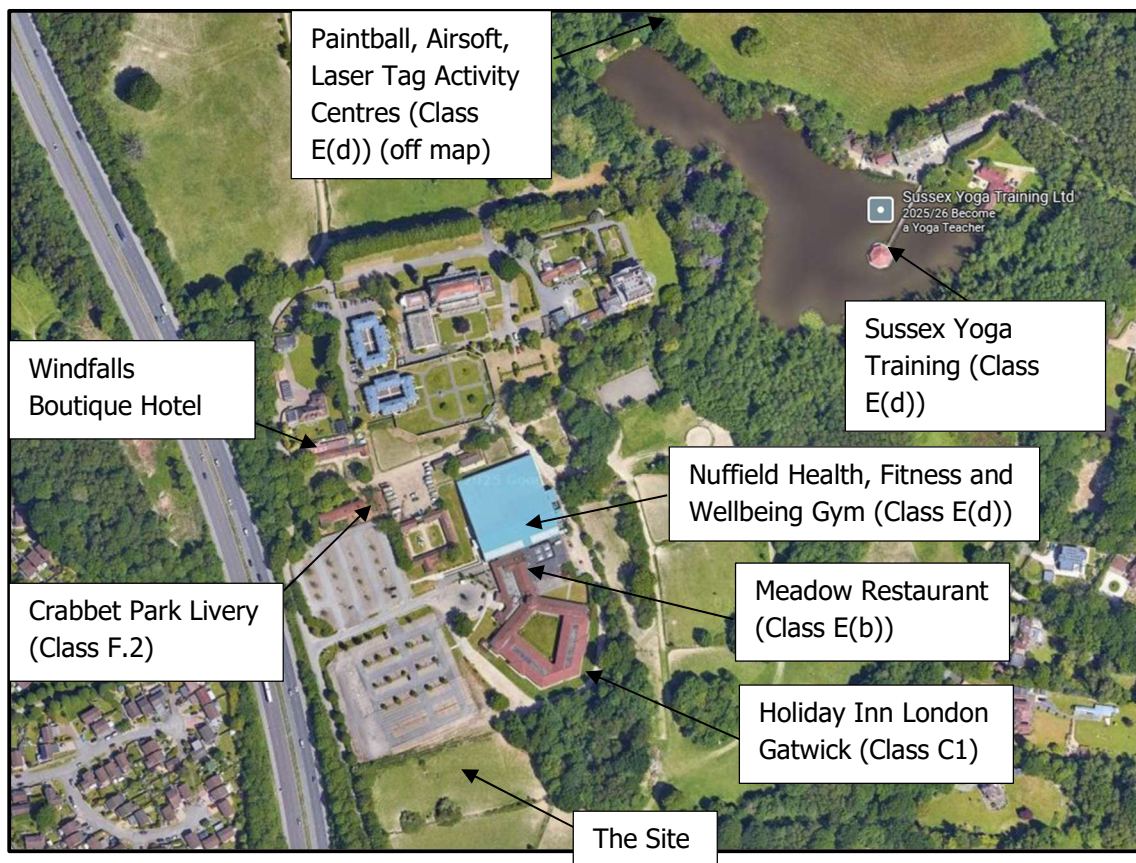
Site Surroundings

- 2.5 The immediate surrounding area to the north is commercial in nature, with a series of retail/leisure uses including a hotel (Holiday Inn London Gatwick), a gym (Nuffield Health Crawley) and a horse-riding school (Crabbet Park Livery), all within approximately 125m of the Site. Please see Figure 3

which identifies the leisure uses at Crabbet Park and the surrounding area. Crabbet Park also contains a number of residential dwellings further to the south of the commercial/leisure cluster.

- 2.6 The immediate and wider surrounding area to the east and south is primarily agricultural in nature, with grazing fields located around the Site. Woodland type areas are dotted in the surrounding area, including to the east of the Site.
- 2.7 Beyond the M23 motorway to the west, the surrounding area is predominantly residential in nature. The nearest housing to the Site is located approximately 90m to the west, with a substantial tree canopy border on both sides of the M23 motorway separating them.
- 2.8 The nearest Town Centre to the site is Crawley Town Centre, located within the administrative area of Crawley Borough Council, approximately 3.1km west from the Site. The closest Town Centre to the Site in the Mid-Sussex Council administrative area is East Grinstead Town Centre, approximately 8.25km to the east of the Site. Both Town Centres include multiple Class E and Sui Generis uses.

Figure 3: Existing leisure uses at Crabbet Park and surrounding area



Source: Google Maps (2025); Annotated by Union4 Planning

Site and Surrounding Designations

- 2.9 Approximately 200m south of the Site is the designated High Weald National Landscape. However, the Site is visually concealed from the designated National Landscape through the presence of a

well-established tree line and hedgerow which bounds the private road serving the site and along Turners Hill Road to the south, and the woodland area which bounds Old Hollow Road to the south-east of the Site. This is illustrated in Figure 4 below.

- 2.10 The screening along Old Hollow is characterised not only by mature trees at 12+ metres in height but is also banked-up by 1.5-2 metres along the southern part. As such no views of the site are afforded from the road either for pedestrians, drivers or horse riders. Given the surrounding roads are narrow, long views across the site are not possible, hence it is well enclosed almost entirely visually isolated.

Figure 4: Site (Red line) interaction with the High Weald National Landscape (green box) against existing tree/hedgerow buffer zone (purple shape).



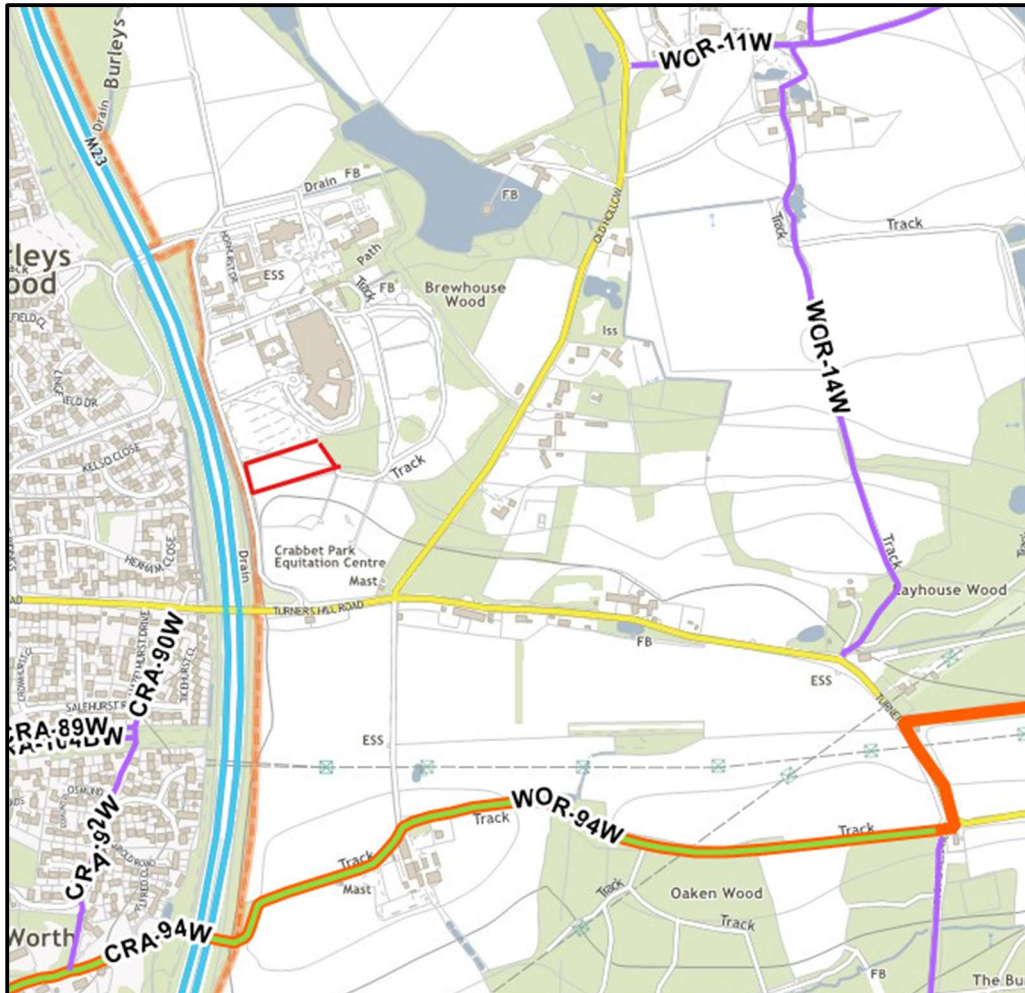
Source: Google Earth (2025); Annotated by Union4 Planning

Public Rights of Way

- 2.11 The West Sussex County Council Public Rights of Way (PRoW) interactive map identifies no PRoWs that pass through the Site (see Figure 5 below).
- 2.12 The closest PRoW to the Site is CRA.90W, located approximately 200m south-west of the Site, running east-west between Salehurst Road and Turners Hill Road within the existing built-up area west of the M23.
- 2.13 Bridleway WOR.94W is located approximately 520m south of the Site within the High Weald National Landscape. WOR.94W forms part of Worth Way long distance trail running east-west along an old railway line, connecting Three bridges to East Grinstead.

- 2.14 Footpath WOR.14W is located approximately 720m east of the Site running north-south, connecting Turners Hill Road to Old Hollow via footpath WOR.11W.
- 2.15 There are no PRowS located within the immediate surrounding area to the north of the Site.

Figure 5: PRow Map with approximate red-line boundary of Site



Source: West Sussex County Council Interactive Map (2025); annotated by Union4 Planning

Ancient Woodland

- 2.16 To the east of the application there is an area of designated ancient woodland. The below extract from Natural England Magic Maps (Figure 6) shows the dark green shading immediately south of the access road and parking associated with the existing Holiday Inn hotel adjacent to the application site.
- 2.17 When cross-referenced with the document "A revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Mid Sussex District, West Sussex Report and Inventory Maps Revised February 2007" accessible in the Council's Local Plan Evidence Base library, the area appears to be classified as ancient semi-natural woodland.

Figure 5: Map extract showing designated ancient woodland



Source: Magic Maps (2025); annotated by Union4 Planning

Transport Network and Accessibility

- 2.18 There are two bus stops to the south of the site on Turners Hill Road, less than 250m from the site. Bus 84 travels in both directions between Crawley and East Grinstead. Around 500, further to the west along Turners Hill Road towards Three Bridges and Crawley, buses 4 and 5 to Gatwick Airport and bus 643 running between Pound Hill and East Grinstead are served by further bus stops. These buses provide a good network of public transport between the local area and the application site.
- 2.19 The Site will connect to the M23 motorway via a private access road that forms a ghosted right turn lane priority junction with Turners Hill Road some 200 metres to the south of the site.
- 2.20 Turners Hill Road runs in an east-west alignment, providing a connection between the B2110 to the east at Turners Hill village and the B2036 to the west in Pound Hill, Crawley. The M23 serves connections to Gatwick Airport and Greater London to the north, the wider Crawley area to the west, and Brighton to the south.

3.0 Planning History

- 3.1 The Site has no relevant planning history available on the Mid Sussex online planning register.

Highways Pre-application Consultation (Ref: PRE-081-25)

- 3.2 A Highways pre-application in relation to the proposal was submitted to West Sussex County Council Highways Authority on 8 September 2025. A Highways written response (Ref: PRE-081-25) was received on 24 September 2025.
- 3.3 As part of the submission, a Transport Technical Note was prepared by Crosby Transport Planning. The document provided details regarding visibility at the proposed access point onto the private road, as well as a swept path analysis for vans, refuse vehicles and fire appliances. Based on the information provided, the geometry of the access point and achievable visibility was considered sufficient for the proposed use by the County Highways Authority.
- 3.4 As part of a full planning application, the written response confirmed that the Local Highways Authority would require details of parking and cycle storage provision, as well as an assessment of whether the proposal would generate a significant increase in vehicular trips at the existing access onto Turners Hill Road.
- 3.5 Based on the Transport Note provided in the assessment, the County Highways Authority were satisfied that 30 parking spaces would be sufficient for the proposal, with all parking spaces to be a minimum of 2.4 x 4.8m (excluding disabled parking spaces). The 8no. cycle spaces proposed in the Transport Note was also deemed acceptable by the County Highways Authority.
- 3.6 Based on the TRICs analysis carried out and supplied as part of the Transport Note submitted for the pre-application, it was considered that the expected number of vehicular movements could be accommodated into the local highway network without adverse impact. This is an important conclusion given that the existing uses on the wider Crabbet Park complex generate a significant number of daily movements at the existing junction, and clearly operate without a highways safety concern from the County Highways Authority's standpoint.

Padel Tennis Applications in Mid Sussex

- 3.7 There are several similar applications for permanent padel tennis facilities on the Mid Sussex online planning register. Please see Table 1 for further information.

Table 1: Planning History of Padel Tennis Facilities in Mid Sussex, including distance from the Site

No	Reference	Description	Decision	Date	Distance from Site
1	DM/18/3289	Construction of a padel tennis court within the paddock field (with associated partial change of use), screening and landscaping works, and installation of a temporary construction access road.	Approved	October 2018	Approximately 8.8 km south-west
2	DM/19/0165	Proposed padel tennis court to replace paved area to rear of centre.	Approved	March 2019	Approximately 17 km south
3	DM/24/0019	Construction of 4 padel tennis courts, to replace 2 existing netball courts.	Approved	May 2024	Approximately 7.3 km east
4	DM/24/0832	Proposed single-storey side extension with a roof deck at first-floor level which links back to the Clubhouse and the erection of two full-sized padel courts and a singles padel court with a tensile fabric canopy.	Approved	September 2024	Approximately 21.7km south
5	DM/24/0807	Provision of 2 floodlit padel courts including enclosure/roof structure to replace an existing all-weather tennis court. Erection of 3.1m acoustic fences to south and west of padel courts.	Approved	October 2024	Approximately 11.4km south
6	DM/25/1185	Temporary (36 months) permission for change of use of existing tennis courts to padel courts and associated works (Further acoustic and lighting information received 04.11.2025 and plans 07.11.2025 and 11.11.2025)	Refused due to insufficient information	February 2026	Approximately 14.6km south

7	DM/25/3096	Construction of six padel courts together with a canopy structure; demolition of the existing sheds; and the erection of a clubhouse building with associated store, pergola and outdoor seating area, alongside hard and soft landscaping.	Approved	March 2026	Approximately 21.9km south
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- 3.8 Item 1 (Planning ref: DM/18/3289) was validated in August 2018. The Site is located to the rear of a plot associated with the large, detached dwelling known as 'The Old Vicarage'. The external padel court has since been built out for private use only.
- 3.9 Item 2 (Planning ref: DM/19/0165) was validated in February 2019. The external padel tennis court has since been built out to the rear of the Triangle Leisure Centre with a canopy structure over it.
- 3.10 Item 3 (Planning ref: DM/24/0019) was validated in January 2024. The location of the application is at East Grinstead Sports Club on two former netball courts also located within the High Weald National Landscape in the Countryside. The principle of development was accepted based on its compliance with Policy DP12 of the Mid Sussex District Plan relating to maintaining the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and specific policy references to Policy DP24 relating to providing new and/or enhanced leisure activities and facilities.
- 3.11 In relation to Item 3, the East Grinstead Sports Club illustrated to Sport England in the application that there was an exceeding demand for 4 external padel tennis facilities in the local area to outweigh the loss of the 2 netball courts on site. This was agreed by Sport England, who removed an earlier objection to the scheme.
- 3.12 Item 4 (Planning ref: DM/24/0832) was validated in May 2024. The location of the application is at Haywards Heath Rugby Football Club, located within the High Weald National Landscape in the Countryside. Nevertheless, the application received 358 letters of support which identified that there is a substantial shortage of padel courts in the District and that approval of the 2 external padel tennis courts will go towards meeting local need, as well as benefit future generations by promoting healthier lifestyles.
- 3.13 Item 6 (Planning ref: DM25/1185) was validated in July 2025. The location of the application is at St Francis Sports and Social Club. The application was for temporary permission (36 months), after which the facility would revert to its existing tennis court use. The application was refused due to the Council's contention that insufficient information relating to noise impact was submitted by the applicant.

- 3.14 Item 7, an application for six padel courts and some significant associated works including a “clubhouse” on a site south of Albourne was approved in March 2026. This is in the far south of the borough, the furthest recently approved padel scheme from the application Site.
- 3.15 As shown in Table 1, the application Site is some distance away from any surrounding padel tennis facilities being determined by the Council. Furthermore, only external padel tennis facilities have been approved, with no internal facilities as of writing this Statement having been submitted to the Council.
- 3.16 Furthermore, the Site is directly south of the existing leisure facilities at Crabbet Park. Most notably, a major planning application related to the northern parcel of the site was validated in February 1991 (Planning ref: WP/021/91). The description of development for the application is as follows:
- "Extension and alterations to existing hotel to provide 97 bedrooms, exhibition/conference and leisure facilities. External works comprise of new roads, landscaping and car parking for 265 cars."*
- 3.17 The application was approved in June 1991. Having been built out, the proposal functions as an extension of the leisure facilities available at Crabbet Park, offering a large Holiday Inn hotel and Nuffield gym, providing a unique experience to the local community and visitors.

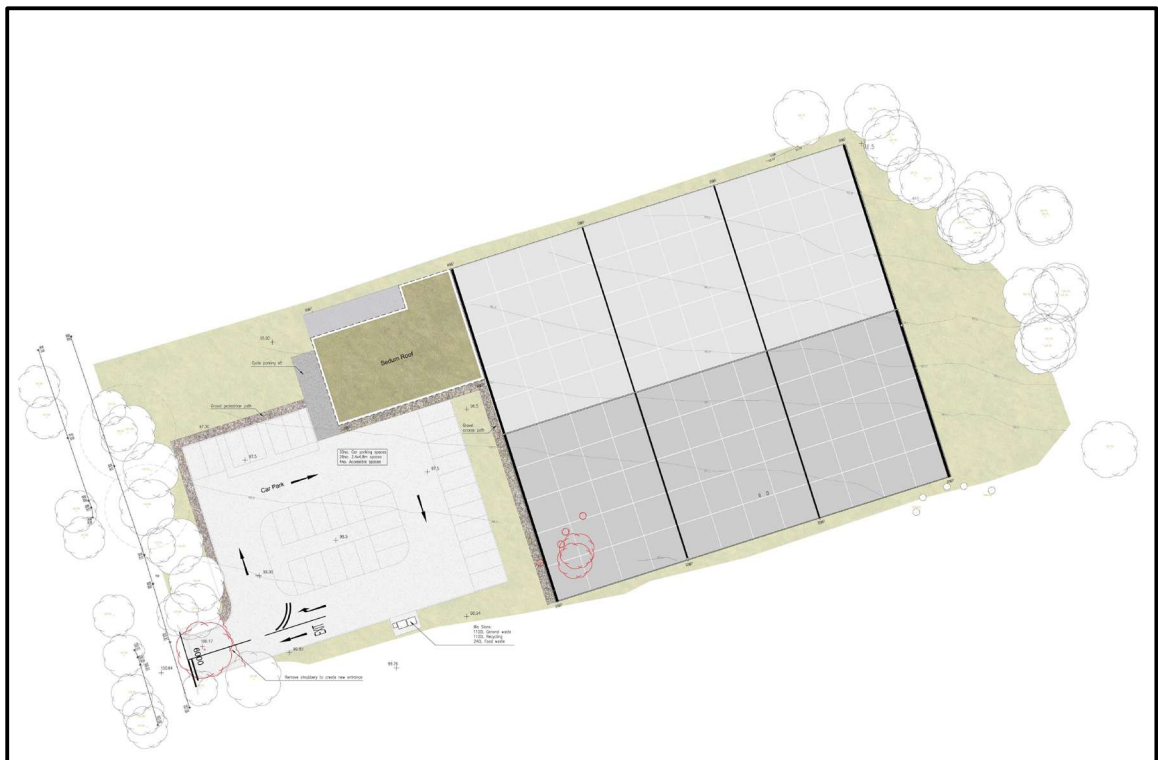
4.0 Proposed Development

- 4.1 This application seeks planning permission pertaining to the use of the land for a padel tennis facility with ancillary leisure facilities at land south of Crabbet Park. The description of development is as follows:

"Proposed development comprising construction of a padel tennis facility (Use Class E(d)) with ancillary office, changing facilities and warmup studio, business centre, member shop and café (all within Use Class E), car and cycle parking, bin storage, with associated access and works."

- 4.2 The proposed site plan layout is shown in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Proposed Site Layout



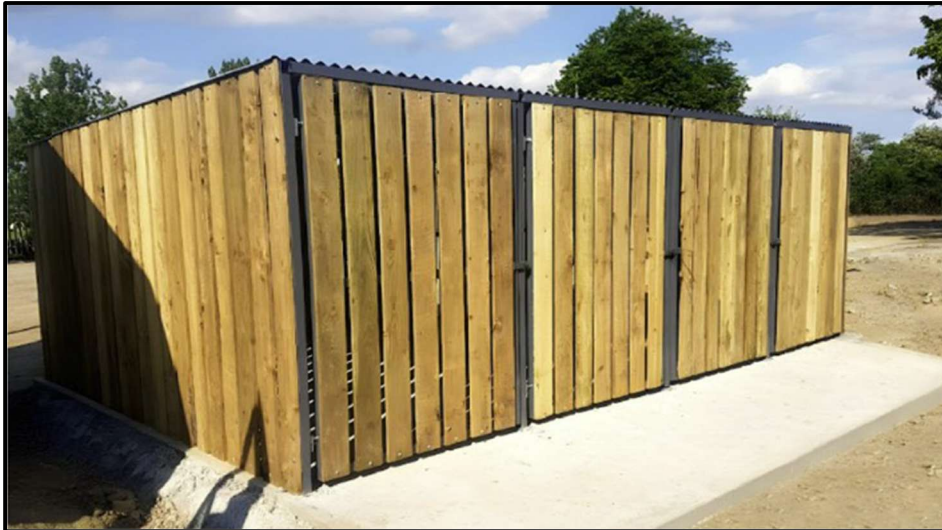
Source: Gavin Jones Architecture (2025)

Highways, Parking and Bin Storage

- 4.3 A new vehicular access point to south-western corner of the Site is proposed off Turners Hill Road via a private roadway.
- 4.4 The parking area will be located to the front (west) of the proposed building, containing a total of 30no. car parking spaces (including 4 accessible spaces), as well as 8 sheltered and secure cycle parking spaces (i.e. 4 Sheffield stands) within the vicinity of the main reception entrance building. 5% of spaces will have access to EV charging points.

- 4.5 A dedicated, secure bin store will be located in a nook to the western edge of the proposed car park. Please see Figure 8 below for a general example of the type of bin store to be used from a material perspective.

Figure 8: Indicative Bin Store



Source: Gavin Jones Architecture (2025)

- 4.6 The bin store will accommodate one 1100L general waste, one 1100L Recycling, and one 240L food waste paladin bins. This waste and recycling provision is deemed sufficient to accommodate the proposal.

Design, Scale and Massing

- 4.7 The proposed development has been subject to feasibility and design development undertaken by Gavin Jones Architecture in collaboration with the wider project team. This has included careful consideration of the local context and landscape sensitivities.
- 4.8 As illustrated in the west and east elevation plans (see Figure 9), The padel canopy will be located to the rear (east) of the Site, closest to the woodland area. The entrance building will be located to the front (west), positioned closest to the wider Crabbet Park complex.
- 4.9 The proposed canopy covering the padel courts will adopt a stepped-back approach. The stepping of the canopy allows the mass of the building to be broken down into two sections/configurations. The first configuration contains the entrance building and the lower ground level padel court canopy, whilst the second configuration contains just the upper ground level padel court canopy.

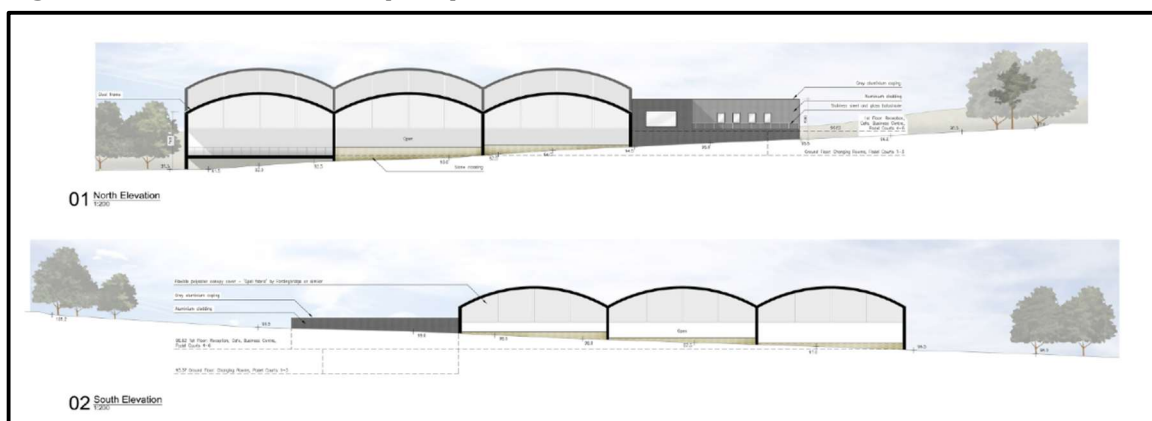
Figure 9: West (Front) and East (Rear) Elevation Plan



Source: Gavin Jones Architecture (2025)

- 4.10 By breaking down the mass of the building into these two configurations, as well as taking account of the topography of the Site and the surrounding area, the bulkiness of the structure proposed can therefore mainly only be viewed from the existing built-up area of Crabbet Park.
- 4.11 There is less sensitivity to the north of the Site, with the development having little impact on the existing character of the Crabbet Park former equestrian centre. Nevertheless, the reduction in height of the northern-most section of the padel court cover provides better cohesion with the surrounding low-level height within the Crabbet Park leisure cluster, particularly in relation to the Holiday Inn London Gatwick building to the north-east.
- 4.12 Along the southern elevation closest to Turners Hill Road, the proposed building will look sunken, blending in with the wider landscape. The north and south elevations of the proposed building are shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: North and South (Side) Elevation Plans



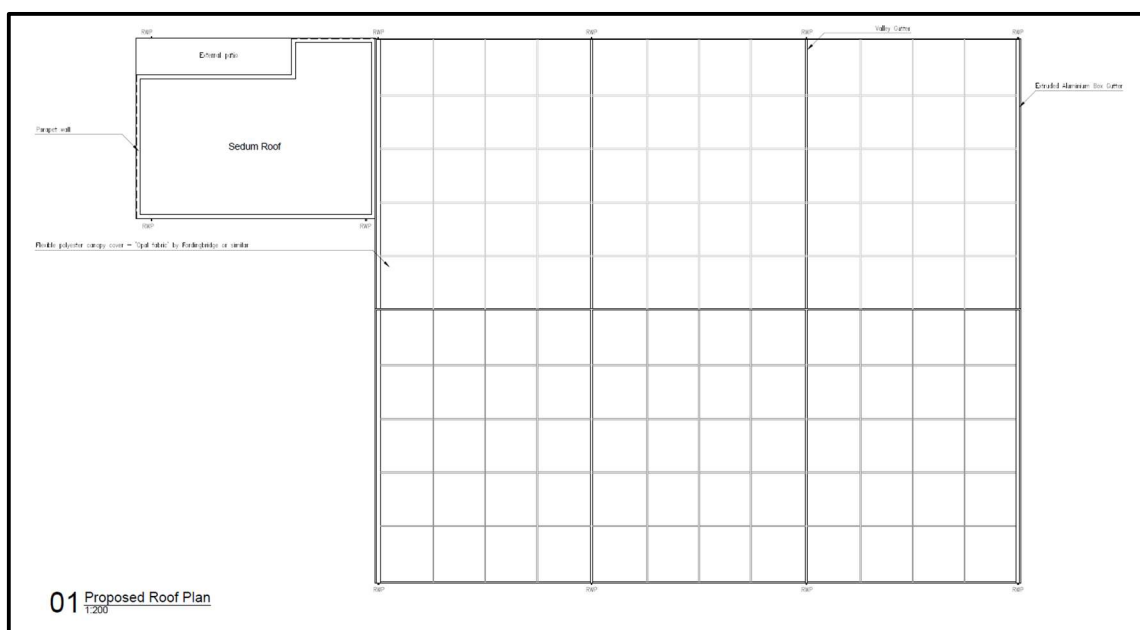
Source: Gavin Jones Architecture (2025)

- 4.13 The curved nature of the padel canopies adds visual interest from Crabbet Park as well as removes the potential for a heavy, blocky-type building mass. The curvature of the padel canopies also helps to evoke the agricultural nature of the surrounding context to the south, mimicking a barn-type complex.
- 4.14 Along the eastern elevation of the padel canopy the building will be left 'open', looking over the ancient woodland area adjacent to the east of the Site. Given the density of the woodland to the east, there is no visual impact from an opened canopy area at this location. Furthermore, by opening up the padel canopy along this orientation, a more transparent building scale is created, reducing any perceived sense of enclosure felt from the new complex.

Materials and Landscaping

- 4.15 The external materials of the building will be in keeping with the prevailing materials palette visible within the Crabbet Park leisure complex, as well as responding to the wider landscape.
- 4.16 The ancillary entrance building is to be constructed using black aluminium cladding panels and grey aluminium coping on the roof to evoke a more agricultural looking design in relation to the more rural surroundings.
- 4.17 The padel court cover will be formed from a flexible polyester sheet over a steel frame. The external terrace to the proposed café in the main entrance building and the eastern elevation boundary of the padel courts will have a stainless steel and glass balustrade.
- 4.18 A sedum roof is proposed on the top of the ancillary entrance building (please see Figure 11). The sedum roof will help promote biodiversity and reduce hard surfacing.

Figure 11: Proposed Roof Plan

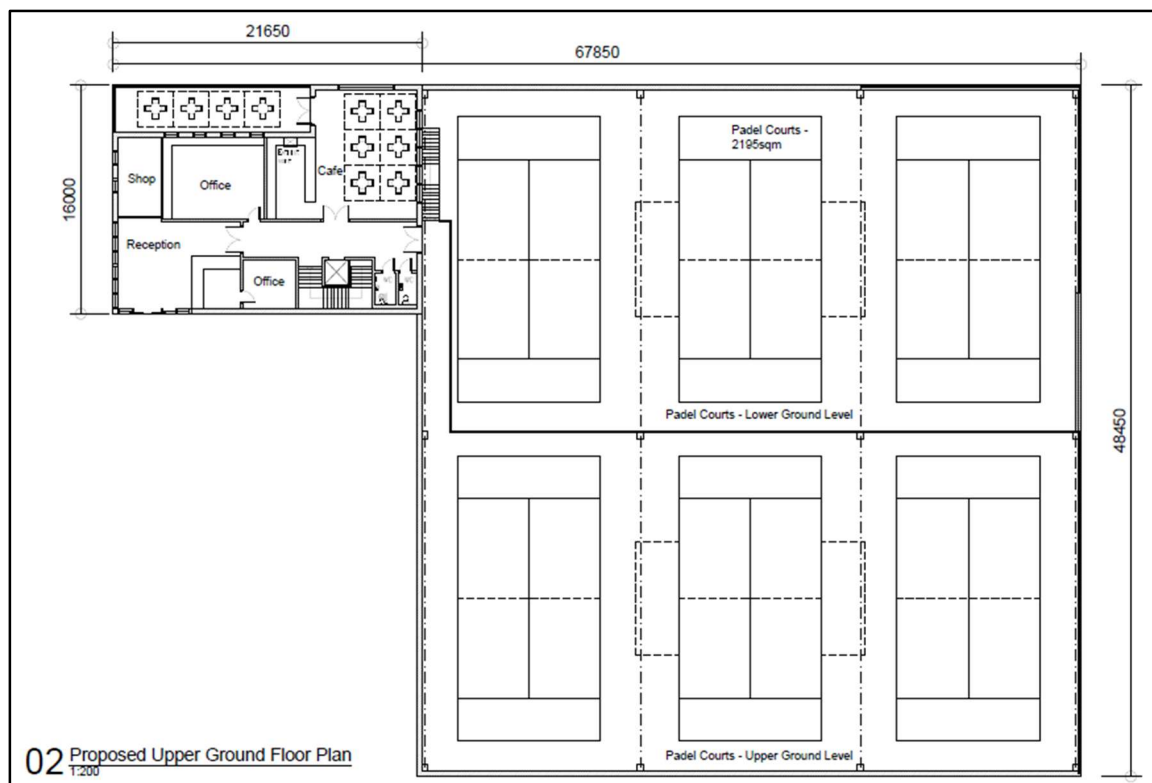


Source: Gavin Jones Architecture (2025)

Layout and Configuration

- 4.19 Please see Figure 12 for the proposed upper ground level floor plan. The main entrance to the building is located to the north-east adjacent to the parking hardstanding area. Upon entrance on the upper ground floor level, an open reception area is proposed, with an associated admin office. To the north of the reception area will be a small ancillary padel shop and business centre. The business centre is intended to allow users to work before and after games, and as such is ancillary to the padel court use.

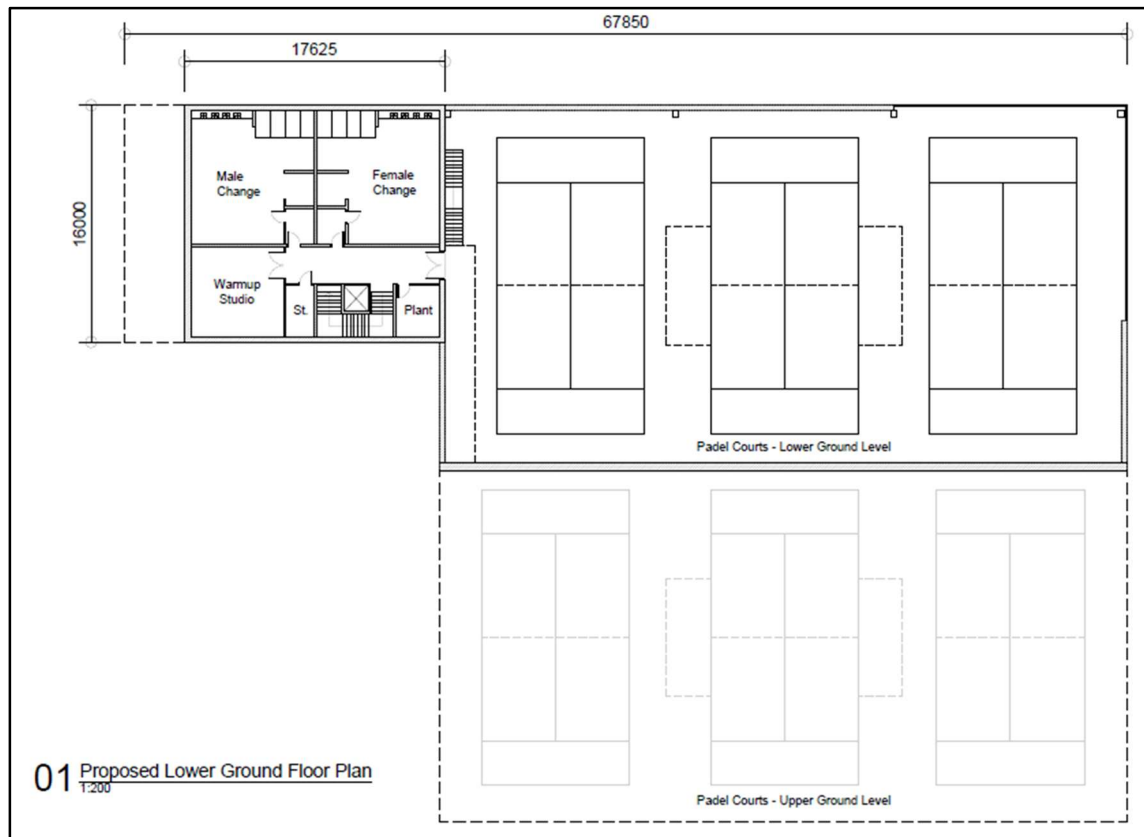
Figure 12: Proposed Upper Ground Floor Plan



Source: Gavin Jones Architecture (2026)

- 4.20 Further down the reception corridor to the north will be an ancillary café with internal and external seating areas, located on a small terrace to the north. All these ancillary facilities fall within Use Class E. Accessible WC facilities are proposed at the end of the corridor to the south. At the end of the reception corridor is access to 3 double padel courts on the upper floor level, located furthest to the south of the main padel building proposed.
- 4.21 An internal staircase and central lift will be located directly opposite the café entrance off the reception corridor, providing access to the lower floor level (please see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Proposed Lower Ground Floor Plan



Source: Gavin Jones Architecture (2026)

- 4.22 Located opposite the stairwell and lift on the lower floor level will include a sizable male and female changing facility. An ambulant WC will be provided in each changing facility. A plant room is proposed off the lower ground floor corridor.
- 4.23 Further to the west along the corridor will provide a warmup studio (also within Use Class E). To the east of the corridor is the entrance to a further 3 double padel tennis courts on the lower level in the main part of the building.
- 4.24 A small staircase is provided to the south-western corner of the lower ground floor of the main padel building, providing suitable access between the padel courts on the upper and lower ground level as required. The building and the internal corridors have been designed for wheelchair and ambulant access for full access.
- 4.25 Six double padel courts are proposed in total as part of the proposal, split over two levels. The padel court facility will accommodate up to 24 persons at maximum capacity. All facilities mentioned in the reception part of the building are ancillary to the proposed use, not acting independently from the main function as a padel tennis facility.

- 4.26 All internal access paths are designed to be fully accessible to wheelchair users, with step free access to the upper ground level padel courts from the main entrance.
- 4.27 The proposal will require 6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff members to manage on site operations.

5.0 Planning Policy Context

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the planning policies and legislative framework, which together provide the context against which an application for planning permission would be considered. It identifies those national and local policies which are contained within statements of Government policy or the development plan for the area, or which otherwise may be material to the consideration of the proposals.
- 5.2 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, any planning application for new development should be judged in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant Development Plan documents for the application site comprise the following:
- Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (adopted March 2018)
 - Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan 2021 – 2031 (adopted September 2021)
- 5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised in August 2026 and is a material consideration in decision making. Other relevant material planning considerations include the Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD), Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and Advisory Notes (AN). The relevant SPDs, SPGs and ANs for the proposed site comprise the following:
- Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD (adopted November 2020)
 - West Sussex County Council Parking SPG (adopted September 2020)
- 5.4 Other relevant documents referenced in Policy and on the West Sussex County Council website are also considered to be material planning considerations. This includes the following:
- Leisure and Cultural Strategy for Mid Sussex 2009-2020 (published October 2009)
 - Mid Sussex Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment (published September 2006)
 - Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study (published June 2014)
 - Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex (published October 2005)
 - Copthorne Heritage and Character Assessment (published May 2019)
- 5.5 Mid Sussex District Council are in the process of producing a new Local Plan. Following public hearings held in February and March 2026, at the time of writing, the Planning Inspector has recommended a number of proposed changes (Main Modifications). These modifications are consulted in for six weeks, closing in early September 2026. This consultation relates only to the proposed Main Modifications and not to the District Plan as a whole. Policy DPSC2: Land at Crabbet Park is amended to show the allocation excluding this application site, based on a plan submitted by Slingsby Property Group (shown at Figure 14 below).

National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026)

- 5.6 The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in August 2026, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and is a material consideration of critical importance in decision-making.
- 5.7 Achieving Sustainable Development (Chapter 4) confirms that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Policy S3 applies a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For the application site, which is currently located outside a defined settlement, Policy S5 states that certain forms of development should be approved, including development for outdoor sport and recreation and development for rural businesses and services where a location outside a settlement is necessary. Such proposals should be approved unless benefits are substantially outweighed by adverse effects.
- 5.8 Building a Strong, Effective Economy (Chapter 7) aims to support long-term economic growth. Policy E2 dictates that substantial weight should be given to the economic benefits of commercial development that allows businesses to invest, expand, or adapt. Furthermore, Policy E4 supports the sustainable growth of businesses in rural areas through well-designed new buildings and facilities to support rural leisure and tourism. It recognises that such business needs may require locations outside settlements not well served by public transport.
- 5.9 Making Effective Use of Land (Chapter 12) promotes the effective use of land. Policy L2 provides substantial weight to the benefits of making better use of underutilised land and buildings.
- 5.10 Achieving Well-Designed Places (Chapter 14) sets out key principles for design. Policy DP3 requires proposals to respond to their context and integrate with their surroundings, while reflecting principles of liveability, nature, and identity. Substantial weight is given to outstanding or innovative designs that promote high levels of sustainability.
- 5.11 Promoting Healthy Communities (Chapter 16) supports the creation of healthy, inclusive places. Policy HC4 specifies that substantial weight should be given to benefits where new or improved community facilities are provided, or where development makes a demonstrable contribution to promoting good health and social interaction, such as through new recreation facilities.
- 5.12 Pollution and Public Protection (Chapter 17) ensures development is appropriate for its location regarding pollution and hazards. Policy P3 requires healthy living conditions and the mitigation of potential adverse impacts from noise and artificial light. Policy P4 incorporates the 'agent of change' principle, ensuring that existing businesses and facilities do not have unreasonable restrictions placed upon them by new development.

Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (March 2018)

- 5.13 The Mid Sussex District Plan was adopted in March 2018, forming part of the Development Plan for the Council. The document sets out the vision and planning policies for Mid-Sussex up to 2031.
- 5.14 In the current Local Plan, the application Site lies outside the nearest Built-Up Area Boundary of Copthorne, located in the Open Countryside. Policy DP1 'Sustainable Economic Development' states that 543 additional jobs per year need to be created. This is to be achieved by encouraging high-quality development of land and premises to meet the needs of 21st century businesses. Provision for new employment land and premises will be made by allowing new small-scale economic development in the countryside in accordance with the Development in the Countryside policies.
- 5.15 Policy DP2 'Town Centre Development' identifies that a sequential test must be applied to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with the District Plan and a relevant Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.16 Policy DP6 'Settlement Hierarchy' identifies that the growth of settlements outside defined built-up area boundaries is acceptable where the following apply:
- "1) ... where the proposed development is for fewer than 10 dwellings;*
- 2) The site is contiguous with an existing built-up area of the settlement; and*
- 3) The development is demonstrated to be sustainable, including by reference to the settlement hierarchy."*
- 5.17 Policy DP12 'Protection and Enhancement of Countryside' states that development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhance the quality of the rural and landscaping character of the District, and is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document, or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.18 Policy DP14 'Sustainable Rural Development and the Rural Economy' states that provided it does not conflict with Policy DP12, new small-scale economic development within the countryside will be permitted, provided that it supports sustainable growth and the vitality of the rural economy.
- 5.19 Policy DP21 'Transport' states that decisions on development proposal need to take into account circumstances where development needs to be located in the countryside, such as rural economic uses. Appropriate opportunities should be facilitated for increased use of alternative means of transport from the private car. The scheme should be designed to adoptable standards, or other standards as agreed by the LPA. Where practical and viable, developments should be located and designed to incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.

- 5.20 Policy DP22 'Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes' states that Rights of way, national cycle routes and recreational routes will be protected by ensuring development does not result in the loss of or does not adversely affect a right of way or other recreational routes.
- 5.21 Policy DP24 'Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Activities' states that development that provides new leisure activities and facilities in accordance with the strategic aims of the Leisure and Cultural Strategy for Mid Sussex will be supported.
- 5.22 Policy DP25 'Community Facilities and Local Services' states that the provision of community facilities and local services that contribute to creating sustainable communities will be supported.
- 5.23 Policy DP26 'Character and Design' identifies that all development will be well designed. All applicants will be required to demonstrate the following parameters are satisfied: layout, landscaping, public and private realms, sense of place, protecting open spaces and trees, does not harm existing and future amenities, parking, and optimisation of site potential.
- 5.24 Policy DP28 'Accessibility' states that all development will be required to meet and maintain high standards of accessibility so all users can use them safely.
- 5.25 Policy DP29 'Noise, Air and Light Pollution' identifies that in certain circumstances, the applicant is required to provide a noise assessment of the impact of noise generated by a proposed development. For light pollution, the impact on local amenity or intrinsically dark landscapes should be minimised in terms of intensity and number of fittings. Good design of fittings should be shown by the applicant for proposed lighting schemes.
- 5.26 Policy DP37 'Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows' states that trees, woodland and hedgerows will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development incorporates them into the design of new development, prevent root system damage, has appropriate protection measures through the development process.
- 5.27 Policy DP38 'Biodiversity' states that biodiversity will need to be protected and enhanced by taking opportunities to improve, enhance manage and restore biodiversity so that there is a net gain in biodiversity.
- 5.28 Policy DP39 'Sustainable Design and Construction' states that all development proposals should seek to improve the sustainability of development and should, where appropriate and feasible, minimise energy use, use renewable sources of energy, and maximise efficient use of resources.
- 5.29 Policy DP41 'Flood Risk and Drainage' states that the preferred hierarchy of managing surface water drainage from any development is firstly through Infiltration Measures, then attenuation and discharge to watercourses. If these cannot be met, then surface water drainage should discharge to surface water only sewers.

- 5.30 Policy DP42 'Water Infrastructure and the Water Environment' states that new non-residential development proposals should be in accordance with meeting the 'good' standard, as a minimum, with regard to BREEAM water consumption targets. Development proposals which increase the demand for off-site service infrastructure will be permitted where the applicant can demonstrate that sufficient capacity off-site exists, or set out how appropriate infrastructure improvements will be completed, and that there is adequate water supply to serve the development. Development should also connect to public sewage treatment networks. If not, proposals should provide sufficient information to understand implication for the water environment.

Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan 2021 – 2031 (September 2021)

- 5.31 The Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in September 2021. The document sets out the vision of development within the Copthorne ward.
- 5.32 The site is identified as being located in the Agricultural Belt character area according to the Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map.
- 5.33 Policy CNP1 'General Development Requirements' states that proposals will be supported where they sustain or reinforce the positive aspects that make up the individual character and distinctiveness of each character area. Development should not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of existing and future occupants. Development should be designed and arranged to maintain separation between Copthorne Village and other surrounding settlements.
- 5.34 Policy CNP10 'CA2: Agricultural Belt' states that development proposals should sustain and where practicable reinforce the positive aspects that make up the individual character and distinctiveness of CA2. Development proposals associated with clusters of commercial development should incorporate appropriate vegetation/screening to enhance the wider agricultural characters. Proposals that reinforce the existing woodland along the M23 will be supported.
- 5.35 Policy CNP14 'Sustainable Transport' states that for new development, all off road parking spaces should be ready for electric charging, either by installing electric car chargers, or installing cabling or ducting for installation in the future.
- 5.36 Policy CNP15 'Car Parking' states that new development should include car parking spaces in accordance with the latest West Sussex County Council guidance. It should be demonstrated the application of higher standards would not have a detrimental impact on the proposed development.

Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD (November 2020)

- 5.37 The Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD was adopted in November 2020. It is intended to form and guide the quality of design for all development across the district.

- 5.38 Chapter 2 relates to understanding the context of the site. The Site is identified as within the High Weald Landscape Character Area, denoted by its dense network of hedgerows and copses, creating a sense of enclosure.
- 5.39 Chapter 4 relates to site layout and spaces. Principle DG22 identifies that facilities for refuse and recycling storage should be carefully designed and located so they are neither visually obtrusive nor obstructive by car parking, and within secure and well-ventilated areas.
- 5.40 Chapter 5 relates to site optimisation and mixed use. Principle DG31 identifies that new development should generally respond to the scale, massing and grain of adjacent areas and the settlement context within which it is located.
- 5.41 Chapter 7 relates to business parks/employment areas. Principle DG44 sets out guidance on the design of commercial buildings. The design of commercial buildings must consider ground floor articulation to create a more human scale through generous, welcoming entrances, careful selection of facing materials that blend with the surroundings and/or complement existing adjacent buildings, the location of reception and office areas so that it positively contributes to the surveillance of entrance areas and forecourts, and measures to mitigate height/bulk. Measures taken for renewable energy should also be considered.

West Sussex County Council Parking SPG (September 2020)

- 5.42 The West Sussex County Council Parking SPG was adopted in September 2020. The guidance is aimed at providing sufficient parking for all types of new developments while maintaining highway network operations and protecting surrounding communities.
- 5.43 Principle A 'Accommodating Parking Demands' identifies that calculation of parking for non-residential development should normally be based on the land-use, the trip rate associated with the development (including base and forecast mode share) and the use group of staff/visitors of the site (including shift patterns).
- 5.44 Principle B 'EV Charging Infrastructure' identifies that 'Active' charging points should be provided at a minimum of 20% of all parking spaces with ducting provided at all remaining space where appropriate to provide 'passive' provision.
- 5.45 Under Paragraph 4.16 of the SPD, disabled persons parking spaces should be provided at a minimum of 5% of the total number of parking spaces being provided on site.
- 5.46 Table 3 of the SPG illustrates that the guidance on non-residential vehicular and cycling parking demand for 'Assembly and Leisure' developments is 1 space per 22 sq m for vehicular parking, and 1 space per 4 staff plus visitor/customer cycling parking respectively.
- 5.47 However, as mentioned in Paragraph 6.3, these calculations are only initial starting point, and should be based on a site-specific assessment which seeks a balance of operational needs, space

requirements, efficient use of land and cost attributed to providing parking, and where relevant, in attracting/retaining staff.

- 5.48 Paragraph 6.7 identifies that in designing provision for EV charging infrastructure at non-residential developments, there is a need to take account of likely parking behaviour (e.g. expected duration of stays) which could affect the number of 'active' spaces.
- 5.49 The SPD recommends that a Parking Capacity Survey is prepared and submitted alongside the application, taking into account the guidance provided to illustrate the parking required. This can be provided in the form of a short summary report, or as part of a Transport Statement.

Leisure and Cultural Strategy for Mid Sussex 2009-2020 (October 2009)

- 5.50 The Leisure and Cultural Strategy for Mid Sussex document was published in October 2009. Policy DP24 of the Mid Sussex District Plan identifies that leisure development should meet the strategic aims outlined in this document.
- 5.51 Strategic Aim 1 'Widening Access' states that development should maximise opportunity for adults to participate in physical activity. This should address barriers to participation, focusing on key target groups, and provide programmes that are attractive, accessible and affordable.
- 5.52 Strategic Aim 2 'Improve and Strengthen Local Partnerships' identifies that as part of development, the applicant should actively seek and sustain local partnerships with a range of public, private and third sector parties where that will increase participation in sport and physical activity. This includes creating new opportunities that seek to enhance leisure services and increases in participation.
- 5.53 Strategic Aim 3 'Develop a Local Infrastructure' states that wherever there is a business case, the applicant should take opportunities to improve the provision of leisure services and leisure assets by the public, private and third sector. This included addressing current and future demand for facilities, making effective use of resources and utilising existing unused capacity.
- 5.54 Strategic Aim 4 'Raise profile of Culture and Physical Activity Opportunities' identifies that development should improve the awareness of leisure facilities and services, as well as promote the benefits of sport and physical activity to help individuals and families improve their health and wellbeing.

Mid Sussex Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment (September 2006)

- 5.55 The Mid Sussex Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment was published in September 2006. The document sets out a typology of provision which is suggested to Mid-Sussex council to adopt or adapt to for PPG17. Although superseded by the NPPF, the audit still provides a thorough assessment of playing pitch provision that is supported as an evidence base for Policy DP24.

- 5.56 In Chapter 11 'Issues and Opportunities', the provision of tennis and indoor sports is identified as a main issue and opportunity facing the Council. It is noted that there are no indoor tennis courts in the district, with the Council expected to help attract commercial leisure club operators to the Crawley and East Grinstead area to help fill this gap.

Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study (June 2014)

- 5.57 The Mid Sussex Capacity Study was published in June 2014. It was prepared by Land Use Consultants Ltd to understand the capacity to accommodate strategic development in the Council's administrative area, forming part of the evidence base for Policy DP12.
- 5.58 The Site is identified in the document as falling within Landscape Capacity Area 02 'Rowfant High Weald'. The landscape sensitivity of the area is identified as 'Moderate', with a 'Low/Medium' landscape capacity. This definition is defined in the document as an area that can support smaller development within few locations of the character area [i.e. areas which have lower sensitivity due to their location, screening etc] but is not suitable for strategic, larger scale development.

Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex (October 2005)

- 5.59 The West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment was published in October 2005. The assessment identifies 42 unique areas within West Sussex with management guidelines for each character area.
- 5.60 The Site is identified as falling within Landscape Character Area 'High Weald'. Paragraph 2.18 of the document states that the High Weald is heavily wooded, with a substantial portion of it being ancient, and a dense network of shaws, hedgerows and hedgerow trees. The area to the north of the High Weald Landscape Character Area is identified as confined pastoral landscapes which are locally secluded.
- 5.61 The management guidelines identify that the woodland cover limits the visual sensitivity of the landscape, conferring a sense of intimacy and seclusion. It is acknowledged in the management guidelines that the current settlement pattern sited well within the rural landscape.
- 5.62 Development should seek to protect the tranquil and rural character of rural lanes and continue to maintain the setting of the Worth Way. Development should also be of high quality that it sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.

Copthorne Heritage and Character Assessment (May 2019) and Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan 2021 – 2031 (Feb 2021)

- 5.63 The Copthorne Heritage and Character Assessment was published in May 2019. Policy CNP10 of the Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan references the document which identifies characteristics of the surrounding area to reinforce and sustain alongside development.

- 5.64 Figure 6 of the document identifies that directly to the east of the Site is ancient woodland. The document confirms that there is a concentration of hotels and businesses with associated car parking in the west of the Land Character Area, adjacent to the M23.
- 5.65 One of the main sensitivity issues to be addressed in the Land Character Area is the western boundary being influenced by the M23, reducing tranquillity and the rural character of the area, albeit identified as very locally impacted.

Mid Sussex Regulation 19 Local Plan (Submitted Version July 2024, Hearings March 2026, Main Mods July 2026)

- 5.66 As noted above, emerging Policy DPSC2 'Land at Crabbet Park' illustrates that the site lies immediately adjacent to a larger site to be allocated as part of wider development for up to 2,000 homes, with 1,500 homes expected on site by 2039. As part of the allocation, 1,000 sqm of E class employment is expected to be provided.
- 5.67 As illustrated on the emerging policies map (see Figure 14), the site would lie within the wider proposed built-up area boundary (red-hatched line).
- 5.68 Having discussed the changes to the Local Plan further to the pre-application advice received, the local planning authority confirms the position that as part of the adoption of the District Plan 2021-2039 the site along with the allocation will be located within a new built-up area boundary. The further advice states: *"Whilst this plan has not been adopted yet the Council have full confidence that it will be. As such policies DP1 and DP24 of the Mid Sussex District Plan would be considered relevant. Policy DP1 supports the provision of economic development within sustainable locations and DP24 supports the provision of leisure facilities that are in accordance with the aims of the Leisure and Cultural Strategy for Mid Sussex"*.

Figure 14: Emerging Policies Map Extract



Source: Mid-Sussex District Council & Slingsby Developments (February 2026)

6.0 Planning and Environmental Considerations

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that, if regard is to be had to the Development Plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.2 The following planning matters are considered to be pertinent to the proposed development, and these will be each be addressed under separate headings below:
- Principle of Development
 - Design and Layout
 - Landscape and Visual Impact
 - Highways and Parking
 - Drainage
 - Ecology and BNG
 - Trees
 - Agent of Change
 - Ventilation/Extraction
 - Climate Change and Sustainability

Principle of Development

- 6.3 Based on the changes to the Policies Map expected following the Council's Local Plan Examination hearings earlier this year, the Site will be located within the Built-Up Area Boundary associated with the remainder of Crabbet Park, adjacent to what is currently classified as countryside. Once the new Local Plan has been adopted, the site to the south and wrapping around the wider "leisure cluster" will equally no longer be open countryside, rather that land will form part of an allocation for residential-led mixed-use housing. The proposal is for the development of a padel tennis facility (Use Class E(d)), ancillary Class E uses, parking, bin storage, with associated access and works – which could be now considered acceptable in principle in this location.
- 6.4 The Site was last in use as a grazing paddock for horses used recreationally in relation to the former Crabbet Park Livery 6 years ago. Any horses that currently use the paddock will be re-located to the parcels immediately south of the Site which are currently used for the same purpose as arranged with what is left of the Livery. These parcels have their own access gate/s off the private road connecting to Turners Hill Road, and as such is already deemed appropriate access arrangement for the horses. Given the limited size of the Site compared to the paddocks to the

south, it is considered that the loss of the grazing paddock equates to minimal harm compared to the benefits of making effective use of the land that inherently promotes healthy living and leisure activities.

- 6.5 Notably, the Livery is going through a managed decline at present and the number of horses accommodated at Crabbet Park has reduced significantly over the last six years. The buildings are dilapidated, and the site is no longer viable to continue running. As such, the removal of the paddock (this application site) will have no material impact on the operation of the former Livery.
- 6.6 Given that the development is for employment generating land in the Countryside, Policy DP1, Policy DP6, Policy DP12 and Policy DP14 of the Mid-Sussex District Plan apply. Firstly, Policy DP1 states that the provision of new employment land and premises to support 543 additional jobs per year will be made by allowing new small-scale economic development in the countryside in accordance with the policies identified in relation to the countryside.
- 6.7 Secondly, Policy DP6 states that the growth of settlement outside the defined build-up area boundaries will be supported where the proposed development is for fewer than 10 dwellings, the site is contiguous with an existing built-up area of the settlement, and the development is demonstrated to be sustainable, including by reference to the settlement hierarchy.
- 6.8 Thirdly, Policy DP12 identifies that states that development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscaping character of the District, and is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document, or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.9 Emerging district Plan Policy DPC1 seeks to protect and enhance the countryside. The proposed application will no longer be designated as countryside, notwithstanding, the proposal has been designed to minimise impact on the character of the local area, and to ensure enhancements to the biodiversity of the site and vicinity through additional planting. Further details can be found in the accompanying submission documents.
- 6.10 In relation to existing Policy DP1 the proposal is considered to be small-scale economic development as it will be developed on an area of approximately 0.7 hectares including access track, and therefore less than 1 hectare for it to be classified as a major development for commercial use in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management procedure) (England) Order 2015. The proposal will introduce 6 FTE staff members who will be trained in providing fitness instruction for the padel tennis area. As such, the proposal will make a small but significant contribution to the 543 additional jobs per year goal of Policy DP1.
- 6.11 The demand for padel tennis leisure facilities is growing in the UK, with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) in their 2024-2029 Padel Strategy (published September 2024) recognising that they aim to

facilitate the expansion of padel courts across the country as the world's fastest growing sport. Between 2024 and 2026, the LTA would like to increase the number of padel courts in Britain from 350 to 1,000. The proposal would provide 6 indoor padel courts, representing a small but significant contribution to the LTA's goal.

- 6.12 Given the demand for this type of development and the location chosen for the proposal, a padel tennis facility will act as an extension of the existing leisure cluster at Crabbet Park. The proposal would serve the local community as part of a wider unique leisure experience, re-enforcing a strong and competitive economy by making efficient use of land in the right location that is responsive to current and future trends in wellbeing and fitness needs in accordance with paragraph 17 of the NPPF. As such, it is considered that Policy DP6 is satisfied.
- 6.13 In relation to Policy D12, it is considered that apart from landscape (which will be considered under the 'Landscape and Visual Impact' sub-section) the policy is supportive in principle based on development satisfying Policy DP14. As mentioned above, the proposed development use would support sustainable growth and vitality of the rural economy by its location and the economic and social multiplier effect it will foster with the existing leisure facilities at Crabbet Park, identified as a unique leisure and economic development cluster. The proposal will also provide skilled employment opportunities for the local rural area. Given this, Policy DP14, and in principle Policy DP12, is considered satisfied. Policy DP1 is also considered satisfied in accordance with development satisfying all countryside policies.
- 6.14 However, it should also be noted that in accordance with the emerging Local Plan policies map, the Site has been designated as within the proposed built-up area boundary (Crabbet Park) for new development. Given the positioning of the Local Plan at examination stage, it is considered that this designation holds considerable material weight as part of decision making over this application.
- 6.15 Emerging Policy DPSC2 also identifies this parcel as part of a wider development for up to 2,000 homes, with 1,500 homes expected on site by 2039. As part of the allocation, 1,000 sqm of E class employment is expected to be provided. Nevertheless, it is considered that the location of the site, in close proximity to other class E leisure uses within the wider Crabbet Park leisure complex, makes the proposal preferable compared to housing on site. The scheme makes the best available use of the land to provide an enhanced leisure experience to Crabbet Park for both existing local residents and for future residents as part of the wider housing allocation.
- 6.16 The proposal involves the creation of a new leisure/community facility. As such, Policy DP24 of the Mid Sussex District Plan applies. Policy DP24 states that development that provides new leisure activities and facilities in accordance with the strategic aims of the Leisure and Cultural Strategy for Mid Sussex will be supported.

- 6.17 In relation to Policy DP24, strategic aim 1 and 2 of the Leisure and Cultural Strategy for Mid Sussex identify that development should maximise opportunity for adults to participate in physical activity, with local partnerships sought that will increase participation in sport. The proposal is inherently promoting physical activity and participation in sports as a padel tennis facility given its evidential demand nationally and locally. However, due to the Site's nearby location to the Holiday Inn London Gatwick hotel and existing Nuffield Health gym/wellness facility in Crabbet Park, the applicant is seeking to partner with these uses by asking them to promote the proposed padel tennis facility for their guests/customers. In this regard, the proposal is building upon on the existing leisure facilities footfall to encourage existing guest/customers to try out and participate with the sport, whilst the proposal also creates its own footfall, encouraged by its demand, which will benefit other leisure facilities in Crabbet Park as part of a multiplier effect. As such, strategic aims 1 and 2 are satisfied by the proposal.
- 6.18 Strategic Aim 3 states that wherever there is a business case, the applicant should take opportunities to improve the provision of leisure services and leisure assets by the public, private and third sector. The existing leisure facilities at Crabbet Park have no additional capacity, nor are there any existing leisure facilities/assets in Mid Sussex that would be able to provide a padel tennis facility (please see the Sequential Test and Impact Assessment submitted as part of this application).
- 6.19 The existing padel tennis facilities are mostly concentrated to the middle and south of the District, particularly in the surrounding areas of Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath. There are only 2 dedicated indoor/covered padel tennis facilities available in the whole district (The Padel Hub Crawley and Smash Padel Mid Sussex) which are approximately 10.7km and 11.5km south-west and south of the Site respectively. These offer cumulatively only 7 indoor/covered padel courts. As illustrated in planning Ref: DM/24/0832 the application received 358 letters of support for the proposal, with many supporters noting that it would help towards filling a leisure gap in the district. As such, the proposal would provide 6 indoor padel courts, improving the provision of leisure services and leisure assets in the local area, with an evidential demand nationally and locally for padel tennis. In doing so, Strategic Aim 3 is considered satisfied.
- 6.20 Strategic Aim 4 identifies that development should improve the awareness of leisure facilities and services, as well as promote the benefits of sport and physical activity to help individuals and families improve their health and wellbeing. This has been evidenced above in relation to the response given to the other strategic aims. As such, Policy DP24 is considered satisfied.
- 6.21 Given that the proposal is for an out-of-town centre use, Policy DP2 of the Mid Sussex District Plan applies. Policy DP2 identifies that a sequential test must be applied to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with the District Plan and a relevant Neighbourhood Plan.

- 6.22 It is considered that that the proposal is in accordance with the District Plan and the Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan, however Mid Sussex District Plan is over 5 years old and as such is not considered to be an up-to-date Local Plan. As such, a Sequential Test and Impact Assessment prepared by Union4 Planning (dated July 2026) is submitted as part of this application for completeness in accordance with Policy TC3 of the NPPF.
- 6.23 The report systematically sets out all available town centre, edge-of-centre and out-of-centre buildings or land advertised for rent/sale within the District in accordance with areas identified in the Mid Sussex District Plan and the definitions provided in Annex B of the NPPF. The physical and spatial requirements for a padel tennis facility established very clear parameters for the site search. The Applicant requires a floorplate comprising approximately 2,000 sqm, which is deemed sufficient to accommodate 6 double courts. The requirement to accommodate a minimum of 6 double courts is a pre-requisite to ensure the padel tennis facility is commercially viable and can operate efficiently. Further to this, a padel tennis facility requires a minimum floor-to-ceiling height of 5.5 metres to allow sufficient clearance for the sport.
- 6.24 The site selection process indicated that the Site could accommodate the proposed use in an out-of-centre location and would represent the most sequentially preferable location for the facility given that the Applicant is also the owner of the land. Moreover, the process indicated that the proposed development will not impact upon existing Town, District and Local Centres within a 10-minute drive time of the site. As such, the proposed development accord with national and local policies pertaining to main town centre uses and represents sustainable development. As such, it is considered that Policy DP2 is more than satisfied.
- 6.25 It is noted that in the emerging Mid Sussex District Local Plan at examination stage, the Site is allocated as part of medium-long term housing under Policy DPSC2. However, it is considered that with the emerging Mid Sussex District Local Plan currently stalled for the foreseeable future, it is very unlikely that this allocation will be coming forward. The proposal provides a suitable alternative that meets the needs of the surrounding community, expanding on the existing leisure facilities at Crabbet Park.
- 6.26 Given the above, it is considered that the principle of providing a padel tennis facility on the Site is acceptable.

Design and Layout

- 6.27 Policy DP26 states that all development should be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of towns, villages and the countryside. A high-quality design and layout should be achieved, addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape, and optimising the potential of the site to accommodate development.

- 6.28 Policy DP28 states that all development is required to meet and maintain high standards of accessibility so all users can use them safely.
- 6.29 A Design and Access Statement prepared by Gavin Jones Architecture, accompanies the submission of the planning application. The design of the proposal has taken inspiration from the height, shape and materials of buildings typically found within agricultural areas.
- 6.30 In terms of height, the proposal is for a building of 1- to 1.5-storeys in height. The height is split into two main sections through a stepped-back approach, taking into account the existing topography of the site and the surrounding area. The main visual 'bulk' of the development is directed towards the wider Crabbet Park leisure complex to the north where there is the least sensitivity. Nevertheless, the design taken into account the need to 'soften' the mass of the over structure with the padel courts stepping-down to the north along the east-west elevation, and a further stepping down from the lower ground level padel canopy to the entrance building along the north-south elevation. As such, the design of the proposal responds to the scale, massing and grain of adjacent built-up areas within the Crabbet Park leisure complex.
- 6.31 Along the southern elevation closest to Turners Hill Road, the proposed building will be dug into the site, blending in with the wider landscape where the sensitivity level is higher looking towards the High Weald National Landscape. This ensures the development responds to the settlement context in which it is located. Furthermore, as identified in the 'Landscape and Visual Impact' sub-section, the dense coverage of trees lining Turners Hill Road screens the site from any potential impact on the High Weald National Landscape.
- 6.32 The curved shape of the padel canopy adds visual interest from Crabbet Park as well as avoiding harmful bulk and massing from the development. The curvature of the padel canopy also helps to evoke the agricultural nature of the surrounding context to the south, mimicking a barn-type complex.
- 6.33 The use of aluminium on the exterior on the entrance building, steel frame for the padel canopy, and stone clad on visible retaining walls, helps to evoke a more rural character for the scheme. Flexible polyester sheeting is used to create the canopy cover and cover the north, south and western façade elevations. The canopy is left 'open' along the eastern façade of the canopy cover. The transparency of the canopy cover and exposed areas significantly reduces sense of enclosure and visual impact of the building on the surrounding environment compared to a solid wall structure.
- 6.34 Overall, the proposal optimises the potential of the site, designed in a way that compliments the rural nature of the Site as well as the commercial leisure uses in the wider Crabbet Park complex. Given the above, it is considered that Policy DP26 is satisfied.

- 6.35 In terms of accessibility, the building has been designed to allow for wheelchair and ambulant access throughout. A generous, welcoming entrance area will be created. Disabled parking and cycle parking are located closest to the entrance area for easy access. Pedestrians will be able to walk between their vehicle and the entrance safely without any significant impacts. Further details of the safety of the car parking area for visitors can be found in the 'Highways and Parking' sub-section below.
- 6.36 The courts allow for wheelchair access, with the lower court reached via a central lift. There is an accessible WC located on the entrance level, whilst the changing rooms on the lower level will have provision for an ambulant WC. As such, design of the development carefully considers the floor articulation to create a generous, inviting atmosphere for visitors.
- 6.37 Given the above, Policy DP28 is considered to be satisfied.

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 6.38 As identified in the Mid-Sussex Design Guide and the Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex documents, the Site is located in the 'High Weald' character area. In particular, the Site is located in the 'Rowfant High Weald' Landscape Capacity Area according to the Mid-Sussex Capacity Study document. This landscape is characterised as being heavily wooded, with a dense network of ancient trees and hedgerows, and locally secluded pastoral landscapes.
- 6.39 The landscape sensitivity is identified as being of 'Moderate' with woodland cover limiting the visual sensitivity of the landscape, providing a sense of seclusion. The Mid-Sussex Capacity Study goes further to determine that there is a 'low/medium' capacity, with smaller development within a few locations of the character area being suitable. As identified in the Management Guidelines of the Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex, the existing settlement pattern (including Crabbet Park) is sited well within the rural landscape.
- 6.40 The Site is located directly south of the existing Crabbet Park commercial/leisure cluster. As identified as part of the principle of development section, the proposal will provide a padel tennis facility, identified as a small-scale commercial development. As set out in the 'design and layout' sub-section, the proposal will be designed to relate with the existing cluster of development in Crabbet Park.
- 6.41 In addition, the site is located approximately 200m north of the High Weald National Landscape. However, given the careful design of the scheme (see 'design and layout' sub-section), in combination with the established tree line and hedgerow boundary along Turners Hill Road to the south, and dense ancient woodland along Old Hollow to the south-east, there is no likelihood of harmful impact expected on the National Landscape as part of the proposal. The high banking and mature trees along much of Old Hollow will ensure near-complete screening of the proposal from the southeast.

- 6.42 Given the secluded nature of this landscape character area, and that the proposal does not impact this seclusion by removing trees and its visual impact (as explored further in this section), the proposal is considered suitable development in this location, with no impact on the quality of rural and landscaping character expected in accordance with Policy DP12.
- 6.43 Policy DP22 states that Rights of way, Sustrans national cycle routes and recreational routes will be protected by ensuring development does not result in the loss of or does not adversely affect a right of way or other recreational routes.
- 6.44 In relation, Policy CNP10 identifies the area is part of the 'Agricultural Character Area'. Policy CNP10 states that development proposals should sustain and where practicable reinforce the positive aspects of the individual character and distinctiveness of the Agricultural Character Area. This includes:
- (a) The remnants of the former estate associated with Rowfant House.*
 - (b) Network of PRoWs across the CA which includes the Worth Way / Sussex Border Path*
 - (c) Few public roads, agricultural land uses and blocks of woodland creating a tranquil and rural character.*
 - (d) The series of millponds located along watercourses, and the suite recreational activities these provide (such as fisheries).*
 - (e) Consistent low density, high boundary treatments and large front gardens of built form.*
 - (f) Historic sunken lanes, such as Old Hollow.*
 - (g) Characteristically rural views from PRoWs from within the CA including typical features such as mill ponds, woodland and agricultural land.*
- 6.45 Due to the Site's location, part (a) and (d) of Policy CNP10 are considered to not apply. In relation to part (b) and (g) the west Sussex County Council PRoW interactive map identifies no PRoWs passing through the site. Bridleway WOR.9RW is located approximately 520m south of the Site within the High Weald National Landscape and part of the Worth Way trail. Despite the topography of this stretch of the bridleway being circa 5m above the Site, the dense lining of tall woodland trees along Turners Hill Road and Old Hollow heavily screen the Site, with the height of proposal not going above the existing tree cover. As such, it is considered that there is no impact from the proposal on any short or long-range views on the surrounding landscape and heritage assets to the north along Bridleway WOR.9RW and the wider Worth Way trail.
- 6.46 Furthermore, Footpath WO.14W is located 720m east of the Site running north-south, connecting Turners Hill Road to Old Hollow via footpath WOR.11W. The topography is around 10m lower than the Site, with the footpath heavily screened through dense woodland cover. The ancient woodland cover along Old Hollow and the ancient woodland cluster directly to the east of the Site would

screen the proposal where the footpath is not woodland lined. As such, it is considered that the proposal would have no impact from the proposal on any short or long-range views on the surrounding landscape and heritage assets to the west along Footpath WO.14W. Part (b) and (g) of Policy CNP10 of the Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan and Policy DP22 of the Mid-Sussex District Plan is considered satisfied.

- 6.47 In relation to part (c), the proposal will be built on one small parcel currently used as grazing paddock for horses that are kept for recreational purposes in relation to the Crabbet Park Livery in Crabbet Park. This is located directly to the south of a cluster of existing commercial/leisure development (Crabbet Park). The immediate surrounding parcels of land to the south and east bordering Turners Hill Road are also used as grazing paddock for the same purpose. As such, the Site and the immediate surrounding land is not agricultural in nature. As explored in the 'Design and Layout' section below, the proposal will be purposefully designed to relate to commercial/leisure cluster, separated from the retained grazing parcels to the south and east. The proposal does not involve the removal of trees or ancient woodland directly to the east of the Site. The proposal does not involve the creation of additional public roads. Hence, part (c) is considered to be satisfied.
- 6.48 The proposal will aim to reinforce the boundary treatment by providing additional linear mixed scrub and urban trees along the southern boundary of the Site, and providing urban trees along the northern boundary of the Site. Further details are mentioned as part of the 'Ecology and BNG' sub-section below. As such, part (e) of CNP10 is considered to be satisfied. With respect to part (f), the 'sunken' nature of Old Hollow ensures that it remains unaffected by the proposal. Overall, the proposal will sustain the positive aspects of the rural and landscaping character of the Agricultural Belt, satisfying Policy CNP10.
- 6.49 A long north-south section through the site has been submitted with the application, to provide an indicative overview of the proposed development's siting in the wider location.

Highways and Parking

- 6.50 The proposal will introduce a new formal access point to the site and will require consideration of parking requirements to support the padel tennis facility. As such, Policy DP21 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, as well Policies CNP14 and CNP15 of the Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan apply.
- 6.51 Policy DP21 states that the development proposal needs to take into circumstances where development needs to be located in the countryside (noting the proposed changes to the site's status through the emerging District Plan). Appropriate opportunities should be facilitated for increased use of alternative means of transport from the private car. The scheme should be designed to adoptable standards, or standards agreed by the Council. Where practical and viable,

developments should be located and designed to incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.

- 6.52 Policy CNP14 states that for new development, all off road parking spaces should be ready for electric charging, either by installing electric car chargers, or installing cabling or ducting for installation in the future. Policy CNP15 states that new development should include car parking spaces in accordance with the latest West Sussex County Council (WSCC) guidance.
- 6.53 This Planning Statement is accompanied by a Transport Statement, prepared by Crosby Transport Planning, as part of the submission of this planning application.
- 6.54 In terms of connectivity to the Site, the local area benefits from a good pedestrian environment. The report states that the site is within a 20-minute cycle journey to Crawley Town Centre with access to public transport services.
- 6.55 The nearest bus stops to the site (Nuffield Park) are situated on Turners Hill Road approximately 60m and 160m to the west of the private access road, running a semi-regular service. The nearest rail station to the site is Three Bridges Station located approximately 2.5km to the west of the private access road junction with Turners Hill Road. This equates to a 30-minute walk or 10-minute cycle time. The station is served with regular services to central London via London Victoria, and further into Sussex down to Brighton to the south.
- 6.56 Given the above, it is considered that the site is accessible for visitors and staff by a range of non-car modes. It is also ideally located next to the adjacent hotel and gym, with potential for shared footfall from those users.
- 6.57 The proposal will provide a total of 29 car parking spaces. 25 standard car parking spaces will be provided at minimum size 2.4m x 4.8m. 4 accessible parking spaces are provided close to the entrance point of the proposed building. This provision is a departure from the WSCC car parking standards. However, this level is considered acceptable and more appropriate based on the level of anticipated demand during peak hours calculated (27 cars) being far lower than the expected WSCC vehicle parking standard for 'Assembly and Leisure' uses. Two car parking spaces over the expected parking demand peak (to a total of 29) is provided to account for any extra potential demand over peak calculations.
- 6.58 8 cycle spaces will be provided on site in the form of covered Sheffield stands. This is based on a requirement of 2 spaces for staff, and one space per court in line with the WSCC cycle parking standards.
- 6.59 As part of the highways pre-application advice provided for the scheme (Ref: PRE-081-25), WSCC considered the proposed car and cycle parking provision will meet the requirements of the proposal based on levels of anticipated parking demand.

- 6.60 5% of spaces will have access to EV charging points. This is considered an acceptable level of EV charging provision given the nature of the scheme and existing connectivity to the Site.
- 6.61 In terms of safety, the proposal will provide a new vehicular and pedestrian access from the private access road adjacent to the west of the site via Turners Hill Road. As detailed in the Transport Statement, the private access road is subject to a 20mph speed limit with traffic calming measures already in place. The parking layout as shown in Appendix B of the Statement illustrates that visibility splays from the access point can be achieved within the Manual for Streets guidance.
- 6.62 A swept path analysis on the proposed Site (Appendix C of the Statement) illustrates that a large car, 3.5t delivery vehicle, fire tender and small refuse vehicle can all easily access the site, manoeuvre within the proposed car parking area, and exit the site safely. Given the nature of a small car park with the length of aisles proposed, vehicles will be moving at a slower pace with quick reaction time expected to any pedestrians and visitors walking within the car park.
- 6.63 The TRICs analysis carried out for the proposal is estimated to involve 82 daily total trips during the weekdays, and 105 daily total trips on Saturdays. The highways pre-application advice was satisfied that the expected number of movements could be accommodated into the local highway network without adverse impact, given the existing uses on site which generate a significant number of daily movements within the wider Crabbet Park complex at the existing junction and appear to operate without a highways safety concern. As such, no Road Safety Audit and Designer Response has been submitted as part of this planning application based on WSCC pre-application advice.
- 6.64 Given the above, it is considered that there are no design or safety concerns in relation to the proposed access arrangement on Site and any impact of the proposal on the wider highways network.
- 6.65 In respect to refuse, a dedicated secure bin store will be located within a nook to the western edge of the proposed car park. The bin store will be able to accommodate one 1100L general waste, one 1100L recycling, and one 240L food waste palladin bins. This provision is considered sufficient to meeting the waste and recycling requirements of the proposal.
- 6.66 The bin store location is approximately 30m from the proposed main entrance, located on proposed hardstanding, and would be easily accessible to the refuse collectors who would be able to stop the refuse vehicle adjacent to the bin store location for collection. As such, the proposed bin store is considered to meet and exceed the 'Waste Storage and Collection Guidance for new Developments' criteria for Mid Sussex District Council, with no safety impact expected from its proposed location. As detailed in the Transport Statement, refuse collections will be done out of hours and undertaken by a private company.
- 6.67 Given the above, it is considered that Policy DP21, CNP14 and CNP15 are satisfied.

Drainage

- 6.68 The Site is currently used as grazing pastoral land, with no existing surface or foul water drainage connections within the immediate vicinity. As such, consideration was made regarding what the proposed drainage strategy would be based on the proposal's drainage requirements. Given this, Policy DP41 and DP42 were considered to be relevant.
- 6.69 Policy DP41 states that the preferred hierarchy of managing surface water drainage from any development is firstly through infiltration measures, then attenuation and discharge to watercourses. If these cannot be met, then surface water drainage should discharge to surface water only sewers.
- 6.70 Policy DP42 states that development proposals which increase the demand for off-site service infrastructure will be permitted where the applicant can demonstrate that sufficient capacity off-site exists or set out how appropriate infrastructure improvements will be completed, and that there is adequate water supply to serve the development. Policy DP42 also identifies that development should also connect to public sewage treatment networks. If not, proposals should provide sufficient information to understand its implication for the water environment.
- 6.71 A Surface and Foul Water Drainage Strategy Report has been prepared by RIDGE to accompany this application, dated August 2026.
- 6.72 A review of the existing land use, topography, nearest watercourse drains, and geological records were undertaken. The nearest onsite watercourse is 325m to the north of the site, as illustrated in Figure 2 of the report. The geology of the site is identified as Upper Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation.
- 6.73 Infiltration testing was undertaken on 18 August 2025. From 0.5m to 2.5m (the base) the stratum consisted of silt sandy clay, and silty clay deposit. Soakage testing confirmed that the soil would be considered 'practically impervious', with infiltration not viable as part of a surface water drainage strategy.
- 6.74 Existing Thames Water drainage systems closest to the Site were scoped out as part of the assessment. The closest Thames Water foul water sewer is approximately 219m north of the site as illustrated in Figure 5 of the report.
- 6.75 No Thames Water surface water sewers were found on the wider Crabbet Park site. All surface water drains within close proximity to the site are owned privately by Holiday Inn London Gatwick to the north-east. However, based on a review of their drainage design, it was considered by RIDGE that there was no sufficient capacity within this network for additional discharge associated with the proposed development.

6.76 Based on the above findings, the surface water and foul water drainage proposed are detailed below:

Surface Water Drainage

6.77 The detailed proposed water drainage strategy can be found in Appendix D of the report. However, an overview of the strategy proposed is identified below:

- Green roof – approximately 270sqm of green roof is proposed above the main entrance reception building. This will help to reduce the runoff rates and therefore volume from rainfall events, as well as provide natural water quality treatment.
- Rainwater harvesting system – A rainwater tank will be positioned above ground with a capacity of approximately 5,000L. The rainwater will be used for irrigating the soft landscaping proposed around the site.
- Permeable paving – Approximately 1,005sqm of permeable paving beneath the car parking areas is proposed. Surface water will be collected via a permeable paving with a drain collection system. This drain system will then connect to the new main surface water chamber and drain proposed, diverting surface water to the proposed attenuation tanks.
- Attenuation tanks – 2 below ground geocellular attenuation crates/tanks are proposed underneath the proposed padel courts. These crates/tanks are designed for no infiltration and can attenuate runoff up to and including the 1 in 100 + 40% climate change event.
- Hydrobrake flow – 2 proposed hydrobrake flows are proposed to control the water outflow from the attenuation tanks. The hydrobrakes will restrict flow to 0.5 l/s and 1.8l /s respectively, below the greenfield runoff rate (2.3 l/s).
- Outflow structures – 2 outflow structures are proposed, connected to 1 hydrobrake flow and 1 attenuation tank proposed respectively. These structures are proposed to be located to the eastern extent of the site, formed of a perforated pipe sat in a grave filter trench. The outflow structure is designed to slowly discharge surface water into the adjacent woodland. As such, the outflow would match the cumulative controlled water amount as restricted by the two hydrobrakes proposed.

6.78 The above surface water drainage strategy makes use of SuDS techniques in line with the SuDS hierarchy.

6.79 Furthermore, potential surface water pollution was analysed as part of the assessment. The proposed car parking areas will receive treatment from both the permeable paving structure and the gravel infiltration strips. Given this, the proposal also meets the water quality requirements in the SuDS Manual.

Foul Water Drainage

- 6.80 The detailed proposed foul water strategy can also be found in Appendix D of the report.
- 6.81 Due to the closest Thames Water asset being 215m north-east of the Site, and no private foul drains being present, it is proposed that foul water be drained to a cesspool located indicatively beneath the car park to the south-eastern corner area (red hatched area on Appendix D plan).
- 6.82 Based on the necessary foul water requirement expected for the proposal, a capacity of 160,000L would provide up to 45 days of storage. A cesspool prevents the discharge of untreated waste directly into water sources.
- 6.83 The cesspool will be emptied regularly by a registered waste carrier. It is recommended that after pumping out, the cesspool is inspected for any signs of damage. Full records should be kept of the pumping and inspection schedules for future reference.
- 6.84 Given the above, it is considered that the proposal satisfies both Policy DP41 and DP42 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

Ecology and BNG

- 6.85 The Site is currently used as grazing pastoral land, with ancient woodland habitat directly adjacent to the east. As such, ecological and BNG impacts from the development are a consideration in the assessment of this proposal, with Policy D38 of the Mid Sussex District Plan considered to apply.
- 6.86 Policy DP38 states that biodiversity will need to be protected and enhanced by taking opportunities to improve, enhance, manage and restore biodiversity so that there is a net gain in biodiversity.
- 6.87 This application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Roost Assessment, prepared by Arbtech. The Site was identified as being made mostly up of modified grassland as a result of horse grazing, with bramble scrub located intermittently along the northern and southern borders of the Site.
- 6.88 There are no on-site designations identified, and two statutory sites within 2km of the Site (High Weald National Landscape and Grattons Park Local Nature Reserve). The site lies within the impact risk zone for Weir Wood Reservoir SSSI. Nevertheless, it was concluded that due to the nature of the use proposed and the works required, that there are no recommendations required.
- 6.89 The PEA and Roost Assessment acknowledge that the woodland surrounding the Site would provide suitable habitat for nesting and foraging. It is therefore suggested that machinery noise during construction is kept to a minimum. Furthermore, reptiles, amphibians, badgers, dormice, and small terrestrial animals were not noted on Site, with the habitat considered unsuitable and unlikely to encourage this. A precautionary working method is encouraged in relation to these elements in the event any of these species were to be identified.

- 6.90 This application is also accompanied by a BNG Assessment with Metric Tool, prepared by Arbtech.
- 6.91 The BNG Assessment confirms that the site has not experienced major degradation, nor does the site contain any irreplaceable habitat. The report calculates that baseline biodiversity units available on site is 1.62 units. As such, 1.79 habitat units (10% uplift in units) will be required to ensure the proposed development is compliant with current legislation and planning policy.
- 6.92 As detailed in the Appendix 2 of the BNG Assessment, the Post-Development Habitat Plan shows some on-site contribution will be made in the form of formalised scrubland and additional tress along the southern boundary, as well as new trees along the northern boundary. Grassland is to be retained as a parcel to the south-west of the proposed building with additional trees placed. Grassland is also to be retained to the eastern extent of the Site.
- 6.93 These provisions have helped towards reducing the amount of units required. However, there is not enough scope within the Site to achieve 10% BNG uplift given the limited amount of soft landscaping within the parcel, with a unit deficit of 0.15 units. However, to meet trading rules, 0.14 units must be of individual tree habitats and 0.03 units must be of woodland and forest habitats, making **0.17 units the de facto unit requirement**. As such, the rest of the BNG off-setting required will need to be made through a financial contribution to secure ecological enhancements off-site as part of a s106 agreement.
- 6.94 A completed BNG Statement required for validation is also submitted alongside these documents to accompany the application, outlining the above information.
- 6.95 Given the above, it is considered that ecology and BNG uplift requirements have been satisfied in line with local and national policy.

Trees

- 6.96 Policy DP37 states that trees, woodland and hedgerows will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development incorporates them into the design of new development, prevent root system damage, has appropriate protection measures through the development process.
- 6.97 Policy DP37 also notes that "Development should be positioned as far as possible from ancient woodland with a minimum buffer of 15 metres maintained between ancient woodland and the development boundary." In this regard, the proposed development is site more than 15m from the "buffer zone" around the designated ancient woodland to the east of the site.
- 6.98 As required under the Mid Sussex Validation Checklist, the proposal is accompanied by Arboricultural Report, prepared by Arb Consultancy Ltd.
- 6.99 It was considered that the existing tree stock was of generally of average arboricultural, landscape and ecological value. Over subsequent revisions to the design, the proposal has moved the development out of the Ancient Woodland buffer zone to the east of the Site.

- 6.100 The assessment identifies that no drainage or utility runs will be expected through any Root Protection Areas (RPAs). Only essential SuDS infrastructure (outflow structures) is required within a small area of the Ancient Woodland buffer zone of which is considered acceptable. As mentioned in the 'Drainage' section of the report, these outflow structures will slowly discharge surface water into the Ancient Woodland at an acceptable level as controlled by hydrobrake flows. This water will have been treated through the SuDS system (permeable paving and gravel infiltration) before discharge, complying with the water quality requirements of the SuDS CIRIA manual. As such, no expected harm to the Ancient Woodland from the SuDS scheme is expected from the development.
- 6.101 Furthermore, the removal of a two trees are required to provide vehicular access to the Site. The tree is considered to not be significant arboriculturally, ecologically or with the landscape. One tree is also to be removed due to being structurally unsound and/or in terminal decline.
- 6.102 Overall, it is considered that the proposal has been successfully modified to accommodate the trees and minimise any incursions to acceptable levels. The integrity of the Ancient Woodland is to be maintained.
- 6.103 The report also includes an Arboricultural Method Statement, with Tree Protection Plan identified in Appendix 5 respectively. The Method Statement section contains all arboricultural supervision required prior and during site preparation and construction works, and once all construction activities are completed. Tree protection fencing will be used to prevent access to the RPAs of retained trees and will be erected in accordance with the Tree Constraints Plan. Ground protection will also be used to protect the RPAs of retained trees, installed in locations also shown on the Tree Constraints Plan. This will remain in situ until all construction activities are complete.
- 6.104 In relation to the Ancient Woodland, the Tree Protection Plan identified that Phase 2 fencing will be introduced along the whole of the buffer zone to help protect the habitat. Areas where the two outflow structures are proposed will be surrounded by Phase 1 fencing.
- 6.105 The Tree Protection Plan identifies that there are very minimal areas where hard surfacing is proposed within an RPA. Full details on the installation and supervision of this is detailed in section 8.8 of the report.
- 6.106 The matters of trees, biodiversity and drainage, particularly in the context of the Ancient Woodland, are considered to have been adequately and sensitively managed. The proposed development will not have an adverse impact on the landscape, geology or appearance of the site's context, nor the integrity of the Ancient Woodland.

Agent of Change

- 6.107 Policy DP29 of the Mid Sussex District Plan identifies that in certain circumstances, the applicant is required to provide a noise assessment of the impact of noise generated by a proposed development. For light pollution, the impact on local amenity or intrinsically dark landscapes should

be minimised in terms of intensity and number of fittings. Good design of fittings should be shown by the applicant for proposed lighting schemes.

- 6.108 As the proposal is for a new indoor padel tennis facility on an existing grazing paddock for horses, it is identified that the proposal is for a noise-generating use compared to the existing. As such, this application is accompanied by a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA), prepared by ES Acoustics (date August 2025).
- 6.109 The NIA identifies the closest noise sensitive receptors to the Site, including the Holiday Inn Gatwick Hotel, a future holiday let being submitted to the Council, and the closest dwelling in Crabbet Park approximately 200m north of the Site. The NIA determines that the main existing source of environmental noise across the Site is associated with road traffic from the M23. Given this, the source sound levels from the proposal based on existing datasets and the proposed padel centre building were modelled to understand the predicted sound levels from the proposals compared to the existing noise on nearby noise-sensitive receptors.
- 6.110 The NIA concludes that given the modelling of noise emissions from the padel centre to the closest noise-sensitive receptors, the proposal would result in a low likelihood of adverse impact. All noise created from the proposal would be below the established criteria during the day and evening period, and below the existing benchmark environmental noise levels measured on Site. As such, the sound propagating from the padel courts would fall within the No Observed Effect Level or No Observed Adverse Effect Level per the NPSE.
- 6.111 In respect to Section 16 (promoting healthy communities) of the NPPF, it is considered that the development is appropriate for its location, with the wider site already offering a fitness and wellbeing gym in the form of Nuffield Health Crawley. It is considered that the proposed padel tennis centre would complement these existing businesses. The assessment indicates that noise generated by the proposal is unlikely to cause significant negative effects on health or quality of life, and the proposed padel tennis courts are not expected to result in any adverse noise impacts.
- 6.112 In relation to lighting, the proposal will be within the immediate area of existing floodlighting directly to the south for the Holiday Inn hotel car park. As referenced in the PEA prepared by Arbtech, it is recommended that a low impact lighting strategy is adopted for the site post-development which would outline the areas to be retained as dark corridors for bats. This is suggested to be secured via a condition as part of the decision notice.
- 6.113 Minimal floodlighting is expected as part of the car parking proposed to the west of the Site of which details can be conditioned as part of decision notice. However, given the location of the development, it is considered that a Light Impact Assessment will not be required.
- 6.114 In light of the above, Policy DP29 is considered to be suitably satisfied.

Ventilation/Extraction

- 6.115 The proposal includes provision for an ancillary café alongside the main use as a padel tennis facility. As required under the validation checklist, a Ventilation and Extraction Statement would be required for applications which involve the creation of floorspace within planning use class E(b).
- 6.116 A Ventilation and Extract Statement has been prepared by Union4 Planning, utilising plans and evidence provided by Gavin Jones Architecture and ES Acoustics.
- 6.117 As detailed in the statement, an extraction fan has been located within the kitchen area of the café as detailed on the proposed floor plan. Section 6 of the NIA calculates the sound levels of the extraction system, concluding that the level of noise is far below the existing background noise level. As such, no mitigation is required.
- 6.118 The proposed café area will be mainly serving pre-prepared, ready-to-eat food and drinks. As such, minimal cooking will likely be required, and the service will include heating at most. It is not expected that the café would warrant a separate odour assessment to be carried out, with the extraction fan limiting any potential odour ability. Natural ventilation is also provided through openable doors onto the café terrace.

Climate Change and Sustainability

- 6.119 In accordance with the validation checklist, a Sustainability and Energy Statement is not required for this application. However, Policy DP39 and Policy DP42 are considered to apply.
- 6.120 Policy DP39 states that all development proposals should seek to improve the sustainability of development and should, where appropriate and feasible, minimise energy use, use renewable sources of energy, and maximise efficient use of resources.
- 6.121 Policy DP42 also identifies that new non-residential development proposals should be in accordance with meeting the 'good' standard, as a minimum, with regard to BREEAM water consumption targets.
- 6.122 The proposed development has been designed with the objective of providing a sustainable development, which responds positively to the challenges of climate change. There is no demolition involved as part of the proposal, with only excavation of grassed area for the proposed car parking area. As such, there is no air, dust or noise pollution from demolition as part of the proposal, with minimal impact on the surrounding Crabbet Park complex.
- 6.123 In the construction of the new building, recyclable materials will be used where possible. Due to the use of a canopy structure, there is a versatility built into its design where the canopy can be dismantled easily in the future to reduce waste as part of any future development.

- 6.124 LED lighting will be used throughout the scheme, saving 50% on energy compared to traditional lamps. All new white goods for the kitchen will be 'A' rated. Low flow taps and showers will be installed where necessary. The proposed development will not emit above the minimal allowable standard for the energy performance of a building to meet Approved Part L of the Building Regulations.
- 6.125 Given the above, it is considered that the proposed development is sufficient to meet the criteria of Policy DP39 and D42 of the Mid-Sussex District Plan.

7.0 Summary and Conclusions

- 7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the development of land to the south of Crabbet Park, Crawley Down.
- 7.2 The proposed development comprises the construction of a padel tennis facility (Use Class E(d)) with ancillary offices, changing facilities and warmup studio, member shop and café (all within Use Class E), car and cycle parking, bin storage, with associated access and works. Additional planting and biodiversity enhancement are also proposed.
- 7.3 The Site is located within the Countryside as identified on the adopted Policies Map, but as part of the emerging new District Plan it would site between the existing built-up area of Crabbet Park, and a large housing allocation. The current use of the site is as grazing paddock. The proposed development has been subject to feasibility work and design development undertaken by Gavin Jones Architecture in collaboration with the wider project team, which has included careful consideration of the local context, particularly landscape sensitivities, alongside other technical matters including drainage and BNG requirements.
- 7.4 The proposed height adopts a stepped approach, whereby the visual 'bulkiness' fronts onto the Crabbet Park complex to the north with the least landscape sensitivity. Nevertheless, the reduction in height of the northern-most section of the padel court cover provides better cohesion with the surrounding low-level height within the Crabbet Park leisure cluster, particularly in relation Holiday Inn London Gatwick building to the north-east. Along the southern elevation closest to Turners Hill Road, the proposed building will look sunken, blending in with the wider landscape, and well-screened from the surrounding roads.
- 7.5 The demand for padel tennis in the UK is ever expanding, with a clear consensus from local communities that residents want more padel courts available to them. The proposed development will deliver a much-needed facility for the local community. The facility will accommodate up to 24 people across 6 courts, as well as providing additional ancillary facilities in the form of a padel member shop, café, business centre and warmup studio. The proposed development will provide a valuable role as an additional facility to the existing wider Crabbet Park leisure cluster that exists to the north of the Site.
- 7.6 The application involves the provision of 10% BNG through a mix of on-site provision and a financial contribution to secure further ecological enhancements off-site as part of a s106 agreement to achieve the de facto 0.17 unit requirement. The noise impacts of the proposed padel courts have been assessed in detail and found to be acceptable. This includes any perceived impacts upon future residents should the soon-to-be allocated Site DPSC2 be built out.
- 7.7 Under Policy S5, the new NPPF (August 2026) explicitly identifies outdoor sport and recreation as a form of development that should be approved when located outside of settlements. The new

wording establishes a clear starting point that such uses are acceptable in principle, provided their benefits are not "substantially outweighed" by adverse effects.

- 7.8 Similarly, Policy HC4 now mandates that substantial weight must be given to the benefits of development proposals that make a demonstrable contribution to promoting good health and social interaction. Crucially, the policy specifically lists the "provision of new recreation facilities" as a primary example of development deserving of this substantial weight.
- 7.9 The application site is a former grazing paddock adjacent to an equestrian centre in severely declining use. The site is physically well-related to an existing leisure cluster including a gym, large hotel and the buildings forming Crabbet Park itself. Policy L2 now directs that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of making better use of vacant and underutilised land, such that bringing this underutilised parcel into active recreational use is a benefit that carries substantial weight nationally.
- 7.10 In conclusion, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with the principles of sustainable development and accords with key policies at a national and local level.