

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT STATEMENT
FOR
UPPER CULHAM FARM, CULHAM LANE, HENLEY,
BERKSHIRE, RG10 8NR.

We did not engage in either a Pre App or any community consultation given the sensitivities around purchasing the farm.

However, whilst no formal or informal consultations have been carried out, we anticipate that traffic and biodiversity are likely to be of main concerns to the local community. The following paragraphs identify our anticipated “issues” and outline how we have responded to them within the planning application documents.

- Access and vehicle movement along Culham Lane – a full Transport Statement is provided which includes an ATC Speed Survey for the new main access of the A4130.
- Biodiversity – a full ecology survey and report have been undertaken along with the required Biodiversity Net Gain calculations.
- Impact upon Trees – a full Tree survey and report has been undertaken which clarifies very few trees are lost because of the proposed development. However, there is a large tree planting scheme proposed which is highlighted within the Landscape Masterplan.
- Impact on agricultural land – this has been addressed within the Design and Planning Statement.
- Visual Impact – a full detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been undertaken including a Zone of Theoretical Visibility.

Wokingham Borough Council's Local Validation List,¹ identifies that a Statement of Community Involvement may be required for certain 'major developments', with the site being in excess of one hectare in size falling under this definition.

Typically, however, a Statement of Community Involvement would be expected for a 'major development' such as larger scale housing schemes, commercial development sites, or renewable projects over an area of one hectare.

This application site boundary is 70 hectares because of the change of use of land to equestrian use which covers the whole farm.

Below is a brief description of the proposed scheme:

- The proposed vehicular access would be from the A4130 to the north, with a new internal estate road leading immediately east to a small scale parking / yard located in the site's north eastern corner. To the east of it, centrally within the northern part of the site, would be the Stick and Ball Field and Grass Schooling Field. The site's north western part would be left undeveloped.
- The proposed estate road would lead south and then, past the Grass Schooling Field, branch out east and west to provide access for management of the land, and to connect with the proposed equine facilities around Upper Culham Farm. The existing barns would be utilised as Staff Day Facility and Storage Barn.
- Centrally within the site would be the Polo Field and associated small pavilion, with a parking area (constructed of grasscrete or similar) to its west, contextually being closest to the existing and proposed built form.
- Around the Farm, the proposals include the construction of three American Barns (60m x 25.5m). These would be of low profile with a shallow roof pitch and would replace the existing manege with an existing privet hedge removed. A Rehabilitation Pool, two Horse Walkers (c. 20 m diameter), Pump House and Wash Down facilities and Sand Corrals would be located opposite, replacing the existing fenced off paddock. Access into these facilities would be from the existing internal tracks and via the existing field access gates. This area benefits from substantial vegetative cover, which ensures the visual amenity of the residents at Upper Culham hamlet is not affected.

- To the east of the proposed American Barns would a Truck Parking area (constructed of grasscrete or similar), which would fall within the site's southern most arable field with a grasscrete track leading east providing access to a Muck Heap. An Exercise Track would be located in its central part with a Reservoir /Attenuation Pond located in its southern corner. Typically, the proposed Exercise Track would only be used twice a day for the quiet exercise of horses and only during the polo season – between early March to the end of September. Therefore, any activities in this part of the site would be very infrequent and temporary. With regards the Reservoir /Attenuation Pond, it would be enclosed by woodland and copse planting to reduce evaporation.

As part of the consultation process we have consulted with the farmer who has been contracted to the farm for a number of years, as to the proposed development and how he might be involved in the future.

We have also engaged, informally, with the tenants of the business premises within Upper Culham Farm to inform them of our proposals. Due to commercial sensitivities, we have not carried out any formal consultation either with the local Parish, or residents within the hamlet of Upper Culham.

The closest neighbours are those located along Culham Lane to the west and south west. These are separated by the existing vegetation that surrounds Upper Culham Farm and its business premises, and roadside hedgerows. Therefore, it was considered that their visual amenity would not be affected to any material degree and the residents have not yet been approached.

With the design of the scheme now completed we do intend to speak to each neighbour in due course to discuss the development and for them to understand that we have applied for a new access onto the A4130, which will remove any additional traffic and in fact reduce traffic along Culham Lane and improve road safety on the junction of Culham Lane with the A4130.

We have undertaken a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of the whole development to understand any potential views if any and how those can be addressed.

The existing commercial tenants at Upper Culham Farm will not be affected by the development in anyway.

We have ensured that the main everyday working area which includes the American Barns, Staff Day Facility, Horse Walkers, Rehabilitation Pool, Stick & Ball Field and Schooling Field are in the centre of the farm or to the northern section of the farm, so that any disturbance is away from any residential neighbours.

The main polo field with the pavilion is in a central location of the site for the same reasons.

The Exercise Track is located to the southwest section of the site and could be seen by the three properties on the western side of Culham Lane known as No. 1,2 and 4 White Cottages. The proposed Exercise Track is located approximately 100 metres from the cottages with a high roadside hedge. The Exercise Track is only used twice a day for the quiet exercise of horses and only during the polo season of Early March to the end of September. Therefore, any activities within this part of the site would be very infrequent and temporary.

Careful consideration has been taken to consider the surrounding community and we feel that the overall design layout has achieved the reduction or total elimination of any disturbance.