



ET Planning

Planning Statement

Client:

Sillett Equestrian

Newlands Riding Arena

Mole Road, Sindlesham, Wokingham

Retrospective change of use of land from agricultural to equestrian, and erection of a riding arena with associated engineering works

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Delegated Officer Report Application Ref: 201458

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the retrospective change of use of land from agricultural to equestrian, and erection of a riding arena with associated engineering works.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents prepared by Aves Architectural:
- 1:500 Block Plan
 - 1:200 Site Plan
 - 1:200 Section Plans
- 1.4 The relevant application fee will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site comprises a single track access which opens up to a riding arena, with access taken off Mole Road. The site is located within the countryside in Wokingham and falls within the 'Bearwood Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills'.
- 2.2 The site contains two blocks horse stables, found to be lawful through the passage of time. These are located respectively south east and north west of the riding arena.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 Application Ref: 201458 – Full application for the proposed erection of an equestrian facility for training and livery purposes including fifty horseboxes, foaling yard, indoor and outdoor riding arenas, lunge ring and horse walker, reception, office, members clubhouse with bar, parking for 25 cars, three parking areas for HGV horse lorries, and three units of residential accommodation comprising manager's three-bedroomed house, staff two-bedroomed flat and staff five-bedroomed flat, with access via Gravelpithill Lane and Ellis's Hill. Refused 7th October 2020.
- 3.2 Application Ref: F/2008/1241 – Proposed erection of one dwelling with garages and staff accommodation. Refused 7th August 2008.
- 3.3 The proposal at hand seeks to address previous refusal reasons as outlined in application ref: 201458 and presents a significantly scaled back proposal. Officers Report (Appendix 1) demonstrates that the proposal was acceptable in principle and is more appropriately located in a countryside location rather than a built up area, constituting a

rural enterprise. The proposal was found to result in an unsustainable intensification of use of the site for equine purposes which would not maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment. The previous application was also found to not respond positively to the Landscape Character Assessment Document.

- 3.4 Therefore, this statement seeks to address previous reasons for refusal in detail throughout sections 4, 5 and 6.

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 Regarding the requirements of NPPG Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 14-029-20140306 in respect of Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:
- 4.2 **Use and Amount:** The proposed use is for a riding arena for the applicant's own horses which currently reside in the stables on the land. As such, the riding arena ensures that the horses can be exercised on site, as opposed to the applicants transporting them elsewhere.
- 4.3 **Layout and Scale:** The proposed riding arena is approximately 36m X 38m and comprises a timber perimeter.
- 4.4 **Landscaping:** The riding arena is well screened by existing trees and landscaping on site. The proposal does not propose any alterations to existing landscaping.
- 4.5 **Appearance:** The proposal seeks for the change of use of the land from agricultural to equestrian. The arena retains the existing open and rural character of the land by nature of its design.
- 4.6 **Access & Parking:** No change is proposed to the existing access and parking arrangements on site. As the proposal is for the applicant's

existing horses already stabled on site, so there would be no change in traffic movements or parking demand. In fact there may be a reduction in movements as horses do not need to be exercised off site.

5. Policy Assessment

- 5.1 **National Guidance:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a relevant material consideration to the application.
- 5.2 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 38 of the NPPF states that "Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way" and "at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible". Paragraph 123 of the NPPF comments that planning should "make effective use of land" in "meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions".
- 5.3 Paragraph 131 identifies that "Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities", whilst paragraph 139 states that significant weight should be given to "outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings."

- 5.4 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance the Development Plan comprises the following documents:
- Managing Development Delivery Document ('MDD') (Adopted 2014)
 - Core Strategy ('CS') (Adopted 2010)
- 5.5 MDD Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.6 The site lies outside of the settlement boundary and within the countryside, as such, it should be assessed against CS Policy CP11 – Proposals outside Development Limits. Policy CP11 states that in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted.
- 5.7 Exceptions to this are outlined within the policy. One such exception is where the development contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the Borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside. The proposal is considered to promote recreation in the countryside and accords with CP11(1).
- 5.8 As the riding arena has been designed to sensitively assimilate with two stable blocks on site as well as the wider site and is located close to these two existing blocks, it is considered that the proposal does

not result in an excessive encroachment away from original buildings, complying with CP11(2).

5.9 As such, the principle of development is considered acceptable and is found to accord with Policy CP11 and CC01.

5.10 **Character and Appearance of the Area/Landscape:** The riding arena comprises a simple construction raised just above natural ground level with low level edging and a natural sand surface. As a retrospective development, all existing trees and vegetation would be retained.

5.11 The site falls within the Bearwood Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills Character Area as highlighted by the Landscape Character Assessment Document. The area is summarised as a self-contained area of higher ground rising above the surrounded clay lowlands, located in the centre of the borough, immediately west of the Wokingham town. The area is identified as being '*well used for formal and informal recreation*' including the areas around The Coombes being used for dog walking and horse riding. The Landscape Guidance for the area refers to managing the integration of equine related activities into the landscape through the maintenance of existing boundaries and control of associated built elements.

5.12 By the very nature of the 'self-contained' landscape character area, the proposal is found to be sympathetic to the longstanding equestrian character of the wider landscape area. As such, the proposal is demonstrated to seek a modest and sympathetic integration of a new recreational facility into the landscape, in line with the Landscape Guidelines highlighted by the Landscape Character Assessment Document.

5.13 CS Policy CP3 states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and

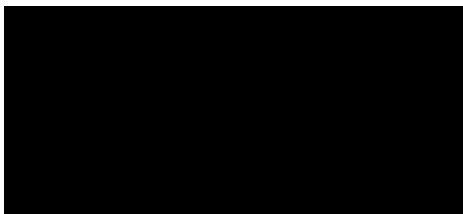
character of the area in which it is located and must be of a high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users and occupiers. The riding arena is of a high quality design and uses a natural sand surface which is sympathetic to the wider 'sandy geology' of the area. The arena is sited within a spacious plot and is well screened by mature trees and landscaping ensuring negligible impacts on the character of the area. The engineering work seek to level the land for the suitability of using the arena for riding and are not materially harmful or notably detracting from the wider site.

- 5.14 The proposal makes an efficient use of within the site whilst also maintaining the overall aesthetic of the wider area. The timber and sand materials used are sensitive to the character of the area and ensure a consistent character if promoted throughout the site, maintaining the intrinsic character of the countryside in accordance with the NPPF. Furthermore, the impact of the arena on the existing character of the area is considered minimal given the positioning of the land in relation to the lack of neighbouring residential properties.
- 5.15 It is therefore considered that the proposal is compatible with the character of the area and responds positively to both CS Policy CP3 and the Landscape Character Assessment Document.
- 5.16 **Residential Amenity:** CS Policy CP3 also seeks to ensure that development has no detriment upon the amenities of neighbouring dwellings. The riding school is sited over 200m south east of the nearest neighbouring dwelling Newlands Lodge. As such, given the distance between the self-contained site and neighbouring dwellings, it is considered that the arena would be in compliance with CS Policy CP3 and would not give rise to changes over the existing neighbouring amenity present at the site currently.

- 5.17 **Trees and Landscaping:** The proposal does not amount to any changes in the existing landscaping across the site, with mature boundary treatments being retained. In any case it is considered that the site is large enough that should mitigation measures be required, these can be done so on site and controlled by planning condition.
- 5.18 **Transport and Parking:** The subtext of Policy CP11 states that proposals for development which would be an increase over what currently exists outside of development limits are likely to lead to increased use of the private car as they are poorly served by other transport modes contrary to Policy CP6.
- 5.19 The proposal in fact seeks to reduce the number of trips via private vehicles, whereby the horses can be exercised on site as opposed to being taken elsewhere by horsebox, or riding along local roads. Existing grazing at the site will also be retained.
- 5.20 **Drainage and SuDS:** The site falls within Flood Zone 1 and as such is at the lowest risk of flooding. Should a drainage strategy be sought after from the LPA, it is considered that this could be controlled by condition. In any case, whereby the riding arena comprises a sand school, the arena is fully permeable and would therefore pose no increase in flood risk.
- 5.21 **Contamination:** The site is not known to be contaminated. If concerns are raised as part of this application, these can be addressed via condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.
- 5.22 **Ecology:** The proposal does not result in the felling of trees, or the erection of new floodlighting, and as such is found to have negligible impacts on ecology.
- 5.23 **Community Infrastructure Levy:** The proposal is not CIL liable.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an efficient use of land.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would promote a recreational use within the countryside without adverse effect on the Bearwood Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills Landscape Character Area or the amenity of neighbouring land uses.
- 6.3 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.



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