

**PLANNING, DESIGN & SUSTAINABILITY  
STATEMENT IN RESPECT OF THE USE  
OF LAND FOR THE SITING OF A  
MARQUEE FOR TEMPORARY PERIODS**

**AT**

**JAC, FOREST ROAD, WOKINGHAM  
RG40 5QY**

**MLP REF: FR/12/188**

**DECEMBER 2024**

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### **1.0 Introduction, the nature of the use and development**

- 1.1. The applicant is a Registered Charity (1127691) organisation, known as Just Around the Corner (JAC) Ltd. It is based in the Borough and has operated for the last 26 years as a youth work charity. It supports vulnerable young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. In July 2008, JAC was granted the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and this is a measure of the excellent work it continues to carry out in the Community.
- 1.2. It operates through its activities in the community and in liaison with schools, the police and social services, churches, the Borough, Town and Parish Council's, as well as the families of those for which it cares. It is a safe, non-statutory, organisation with a specific emphasis on the use of animals (mainly horses) for animal assisted learning. It is not a counselling service and neither is it a riding school or similar establishment.
- 1.3. JAC offers a learning-based approach to help children, young people and families. It offers NVQ qualifications in stable management and horse care. It has always been involved in the local community, with secondary schools in the Borough and more recently in liaison with primary schools. It offers a discipline of working and the link to the widely acknowledged benefits of equine assisted learning.
- 1.4. Students work at the Centre, where horses and other livestock are kept along with the central administration and learning activities buildings.
- 1.5. This Statement details the specific nature of the land use; planning history: planning policies and the application of those policies. In applying these and the other material considerations, the following conclusions are reached:

- The aspirations and operations of the applicant are an important material consideration, in the determination of this application. It is a charity located within the Borough, which specifically deals with youth work and assisted learning programmes. It is an important and a wholly sustainable approach to this provision and includes staff and administration, as well as providing facilities for the animals (primarily horses); alternative curriculum activities (crafts); and horticultural activity. These are an essential part of the learning environment and community work. It is, in planning policy terms, a co-ordination of an existing community-based organisation.
- Specifically, the marquee which was gifted to the charity is absolutely essential for the hosting of events which facilitate much needed fund raising and to showcase the work of JAC to in so doing celebrate the success and achievements of young people who attend the facility. It helps to keep costs down and allows for fund raising events which, in the past, have often been cancelled due to inclement weather.
- The relevant planning policies at both national and local level, allow for the development, as an inclusive community facility, with horse related and horticultural activity, where the administration and therapy functions are ancillary to these uses. The determination of previous applications made by the Charity, reflects this approach as being the starting point for determination, having regard to relevant planning policies.
- In making this application, the refusal of the permission and subsequent discussions have been taken into account. For clarification, the period of siting has been changed and thus meets with the aspirations of the Landscape Officer. Further details pertaining to use and the practicalities of dismantling have been set out so as to guide the local planning authority.
- It is shown that the visual impact of the marquee is acceptable and this has regard to the temporary period for siting as well as the way in which it relates to other cluster of buildings and the landscape framework.

- There is no material effect in terms of highways, flood risk or any other material considerations. In light of all of these matters, the development is acceptable, having regard to prevailing planning policies and on its individual merits.
- 1.6. On this basis it is sustainable development especially in regards to the social and economic element of the definition and these are not outweighed by any temporary impact. Planning permission should be granted on the basis of the submission.
- 2.0 Planning history**
- 2.1. In 2011 planning permission was granted for a building complex for the Charity. Regrettably, this could not be implemented and a subsequent permission under reference F/2012/0651 was proceeded and now forms the main complex.
- 2.2. In April 2015 under reference F/2014/2781 retrospective permission was granted for a Hay barn; and in November 2015 (152882) solar panels were granted permission.
- 2.3. In December 2016 a variation of the conditions on the 2012 permission was approved. 162793 refers.
- 2.4. Under reference 170733 permission was granted for an ancillary building to provide a workshop and stores for the Charity.
- 2.5. In September 2023 under reference 231595 planning permission was refused for the retention of buildings to the north of the site. This was then granted permission under reference 232961 with the buildings being relocated to the complex of built development further to the south.
- 2.6. In December 2024 planning permission was refused for the temporary siting of the marquee. This was confused with the request for a 9 month period which, it is conceded, might properly meet with objection. 242570 refers.

### 3.0 **Relevant planning policy**

- 3.1. National planning policy relating to the countryside is set out in the Framework (NPPF24) and considers that various land uses are appropriate. This includes the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities (88 d) whilst acknowledging that not all will be accessible by public transport (89).
- 3.2. Where there are local landscape designations, these should be afforded less weight than statutory/national designations. In this case, the locality, as with almost all of the Borough, is afforded status although the Landscape Officer concludes that it is a “moderate quality landscape” although this is not within the development plan. It is by any judgement and in the terms of NPPF24, a low level of constraint.
- 3.3. The relevant Core Strategy policies are as follows:

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>CP1</b> | (1) The requirement to maintain and enhance the quality of the environment.<br>(7) Avoid areas of best and most versatile agricultural land.<br>(9) Avoid increasing (and where possible reduce) risks of or from all forms of flooding.<br>(11) Demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>CP2</b> | To ensure that new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities) to meet long term needs, planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of, inter alia, children, young people and families, including the co-ordination of services to meet their needs (category b); The site is located either within or close to the development limits of a settlement in policy CP9 in order to maximise the possibilities for social inclusion and sustainable patterns of living (category D(i));                                                                                                |
| <b>CP3</b> | Planning permission will be granted for proposals that:<br>are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design (category a); have no detrimental impact upon, inter alia, landscape or water courses (category c); use the full potential of the site and contribute to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses (category e); contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and integrate with their surroundings including the use of appropriate landscaping (category f); contribute towards the provision of an appropriate sustainable network of community facilities (category h). |

**CP11** Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside) will not normally be permitted except where, inter alia, it does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from other buildings (2); it is for essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits (6).

3.4. The relevant policies of the MDDDPD are as follows:

**CC01** The presumption in favour of sustainable development that being the combination of social, economic and environmental considerations.

**CC03** Trees and landscape and the objective of ensuring that development does not materially harm valued landscape features.

**CC09** Flood Risk and the avoidance of development which would increase flood risk.

**TB21** Ensuring that development does not materially harm the landscape character of the Borough.

#### **4.0 The application of planning policy, visual impact considerations and responding to the refusal**

4.1. In applying planning policy to the proposals, we suggest that the following considerations are relevant:

- (1) Responding to the 2024 refusal
- (2) Is the proposed structure acceptable as a matter of principle?
- (3) Is the visual impact acceptable?
- (4) Are there any other material planning considerations?

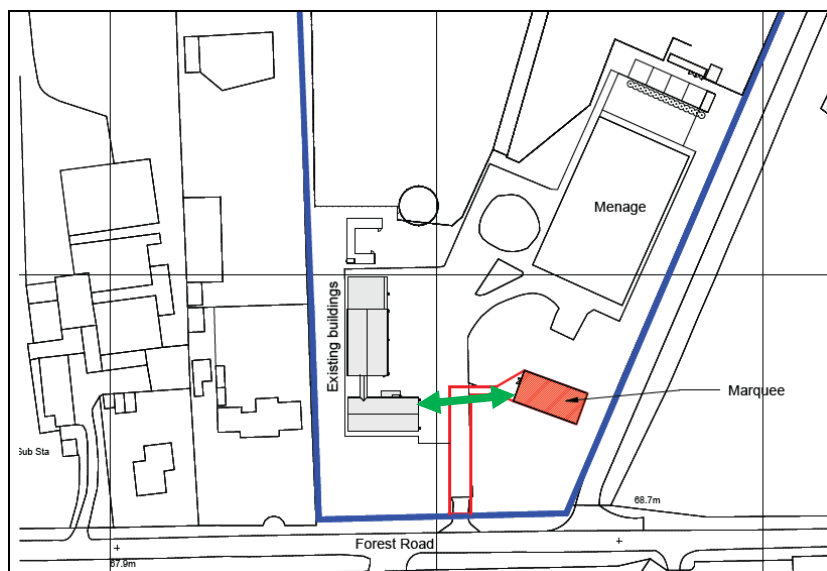
#### **Responding to the 2024 refusal**

4.2. The applicant is distressed by the initial refusal of permission bearing in mind the necessity of the marquee as described above. Nevertheless and in light of subsequent discussions, the application and this Statement, sets out an alternative proposal who comes towards the local authority and, in so doing, addresses the concerns.

4.3. The period for siting has now been confirmed as Easter for a period of 5 months in any calendar year. This is an adjustment of requirements and the timetabled events will need to be rescheduled so as to meet the aspirations of the local authority and in particular the advantages of visual effect which are set out below.

- 4.4. In regards to reason for refusal 1 the complaint of the local authority is one based on the perceived “excessive encroachment and expansion” away from the original buildings. Various policies are cited and these include landscape impact to which specific reference is made below.
- 4.5. From observation and the extract from the site plan below, we say that case is overstated. The distance from the main building to the marquee (↔) is circa 25m and is interspersed by the car park. To the north is the manège and in previous applications the lpa has encouraged development to be relocated from the north to the complex of buildings. These same principles may properly be applied to consideration of this structure and it is further noted that the Landscape Officer states, inter alia:

*I have no objection to the proposals based on impact on the landscape and visual character of the site.*



- 4.6. Whilst a matter of judgement, it is an extremely strained argument to suggest that the temporary siting of a marquee would lead to “excessive encroachment and expansion”. For this reason and the landscape/visual assessment below, this reason for refusal holds limited weight and should be set aside on re-application.
- 4.7. The matter of sustainable transport is equally overstated and misunderstood. Moreover, it does not reflect paragraph 89 of NPPF24 which acknowledges that some sites in rural areas will not be well served by public transport.

- 4.8. In response, the land use is rural based and the events as described below are infrequent. Attendees will visit for the specialist events. It is important in the context of the work of the Charity that attendees experience the work of the Charity and they cannot do so if the event is located away from the core function. As such and whilst acknowledging the benefits of modal shift transport, this cannot take place for the reasons set out above.
- 4.9. Turning to the important matter of function, it has been explained in the course of the previous submission why the Charity needs the marquee. In saying this, the functionality has increased and it is acknowledged that further details would assist the determination. Specifically:
1. During the time when the marquee is proposed to be in place there will be one event per months which includes the AGM. There will be two barn dances for different age groups and meals where participants 'purchase a plate', as well as a silent auction evening and Quiz Night for fundraising purposes; presentation evening of Awards for students; Information evenings for Heads and SENDCos from prospective referral schools. Many of these will be open to sponsors and will reach a capacity of 130 people.
  2. Additionally, local businesses which includes Thames Water, Allegis, Ascot Race Course, Carbonxegen and PWC have allowed staff to visit the site for two days where they take part in a Community Volunteers Day with attendance twice a month. For these days it is extremely important to segregate the volunteers, by utilising the marquee for lunch, refreshments and briefings, from the vulnerable young people who become highly anxious when a large number of volunteers are on site. These days are imperative to keep the cost of maintenance and groundwork to a minimum providing over 1200-manhours per year.
  3. Leaving aside the needs for segregation and care, there is insufficient room within the main building. This comprises a kitchen/staff room, a pottery room, classroom, workshop and stables/store. There is also a post 16 working area. There is simply insufficient space to adapt this for the functions which are detailed above.
  4. The marquee is absolutely essential for fundraising and publicity given the limitation of the existing buildings and the need for money-generating activities and raising awareness of the invaluable work of the Charity. This is accentuated by the increasing difficulty in raising grants even with the assistance of the Grants Writer service from Involve, Wokingham. At times of financial constraints which meant none of the grants submitted in the last 2 years was successful.
  5. The events in the marquee do not cause any parking problems as there is sufficient room on site to accommodate all requirements. This has been accepted in the 2024 decision.

4.10 The issue of the dismantling of the marquee between events is one which has been raised more recently. Notwithstanding that the use is frequent as is detailed above and which would make this exercise impractical, the cost is prohibitive. At the present time for the dismantling and re-erection it is £1,560.00 exclusive of VAT.

4.11. The marquee sits on an area of hardstanding and the case officer has asked whether the siting would limit the availability of paddock areas for animal husbandry. This is indeed pertinent and in fact the area has been used when the paddocks are wet in the interests of animal welfare. The proposed period for siting of the marquee in the drier seasons would enable this area to be returned for this use.

**The principle of development?**

4.12. In applying the relevant planning policies, it is clear that the site lies within the countryside designation, where development is restricted, aside from a number of categories, as set out in CP11.

4.13. In terms of location, it is acknowledged that the function, if it is to be effective and co-ordinated, must be sited outside of the development limits. In short, this is because an essential part of the work involves equine assisted learning and horticulture. As is detailed above, the proposed temporary siting of the marquee is essential to fundraising and is part and parcel of the charity work.

4.14. Notwithstanding this, the charity has located all of its operations at this site and the reasonable expansion as a community facility is policy compliant with the Framework24 (88(d)).

4.15. This was the view expressed in 2017 where the expansion of the use and buildings was considered as follows:

***.....the proposal accords with the relevant development plan policies in the DMM and the principle of development is acceptable.***

4.16. CP11 pre-dates the 2024 Framework and the tests are:

- That it contributes to a diverse and sustainable rural enterprise or as a countryside-based activity it allows for enjoyment of the countryside.
- It does not lead to expansion away from the original buildings.

- 4.17. In this case it is accepted and there is no objection in the previous decision, to the principle of development. Indeed, this position is reinforced through various permissions and that the site and land use is not remote from the development limits. The subsequent development of the North Wokingham SDL has a positive effect on this judgement.
- 4.18. In this case and as set out above, JAC is an acknowledged and locally funded organisation, which performs a community function taking its clients from the whole of the Borough. Thus, it is transport sustainable in planning policy terms: and more importantly, it is practical for the work of JAC. It is clear that the functioning of the charity and the students work, benefit considerably from rationalisation at Forest Road, where the full range of learning assistance is provided, in one place.
- 4.19. In considering the application in 2011 the case Officer noted that the JAC facility might not be described as “essential” in the terms of Core Strategy policies. However, it was noted that the operation needed to have horses and rural activities, as part and parcel of its’ operation. In consideration of the nature of the work, the levels of support for the proposal and the considerable benefits of single site operation, a case for the rural location was acknowledged and accepted. As such, it was concluded, on the balance of these matters, that the proposal could reasonably be described as being “essential” in the terms of CP11(6).
- 4.20. Turning to the specific development which is the subject of this application the marquee, as a temporary structure, is sited extremely closely to the complex of buildings. This is complaint with CP11(2) and the dispersion is acceptable for the reasons expressed above. The Charity is mindful of these policies in the manner in which it has previously sited the marquee.
- 4.21. Policy CP2 also lends support, in spatial planning terms, to the provision of development which is inclusive and sustainable. This includes development, which addresses the requirements of, inter alia, children, young people and families, including the co-ordination of services to meet their needs (category b). This is plainly the case with this proposal.

- 4.22. It cannot be emphasised sufficiently that the marquee is fundamental to the pressing need to raise funds and hold events to facilitate these in the manner described above. To this extent, we regard the development which is the subject of this application as part and parcel of an “essential” community facility in the terms of policy CP11 and CP2. In terms of transport sustainability, the objectives of CP1(11) and CP2D(i) are patently satisfied. It follows that, the proposal meets the objectives of the relevant planning policies and is acceptable, as a matter of principle.

### **Visual impact**

- 4.23. The comments of the Landscape Officer are material and are set out below:

*The site is located in the countryside and along Forest Road which is a Green Route. Opposite the site is PROW STNH 23. The proposal includes the erection of a marquee on land between Forest Road and the menage. The height of the marquee is 4771mm at it apex dropping down to 3m at the sides. There is a native hedge to the front of the site, which will screen most of the marquee. It is proposed to erect the marquee for the 5 months of the year from the beginning of December until the end of March.*

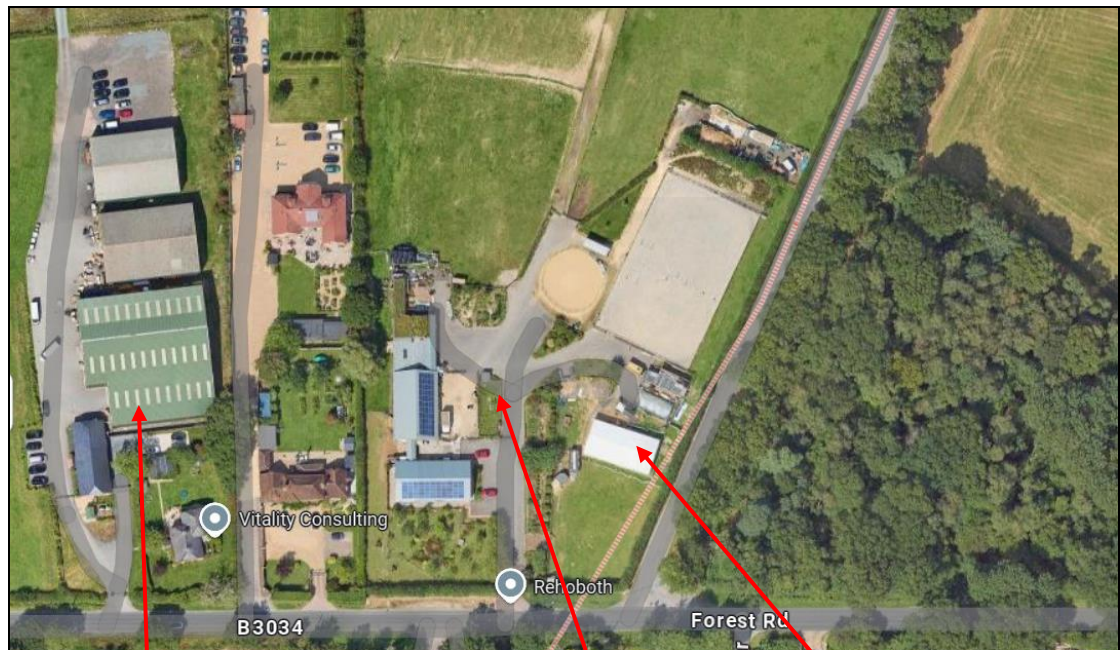
*I have no objection to the proposals in terms of impact on landscape features as the marquee will be erected in a green field with hedged boundaries to the south and east. However, there will be some visual impact in short views, and the use of the site for the marquee during winter months where the hedge will be leafless. It is possible to grow the hedge to 3m and beyond that will provide some screening in the view during winter.*

*The site is located in Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Area 11 ‘Ashridge Farmed Clay Lowland’ which is a moderate quality landscape. The Landscape Strategy is to conserve and enhance the existing rural character. Although the u of itself does not enhance the landscape character, the installation is for just under half of the year and will be largely screened behind a native hedge which could be further enhanced by the inclusion of Privet and Holly, both evergreens, within it.*

*I have no objection to the proposals based on impact on the landscape and visual character of the site.*

- 4.24. This is material and although the Landscape Officer was persuaded to alter her views on the misconceived notion that a 9 month period was sought, the applicant has clarified the position. Moreover and importantly, the proposal now covers the period when the hedge will be in leaf and this further contributes to the strength of assimilation to which the consultee refers.

- 4.25. As is detailed above, the proposed marquee is to be sited close to the complex of buildings where it would have some limited impact in terms of public views. This said, it will be seen in the context of other permanent buildings and the large car park, all of which have been softened by judicious planting which is maturing. This is shown below and can be seen on the site visit.



Adjoining commercial sites

JAC complex and car park

The marquee

The use of land for the temporary siting of the marquee will be seen in the context of surrounding built development and the car park

4.26. It can be seen from short range views (photographs 1, 2 and 3)



1

Short range view from the access to Warren Farm where the upper parts of the structure can be seen above the mature hedgerow. At the periods of proposed siting the hedge will be in leaf and further soften the impact.



2

From directly in front of the site from Forest Road, there are glimpses of the marquee which in the Landscape Officers opinion will be ameliorated at times when the hedge is in leaf



3

From approaches to the west the marquee will be limited in visual impact and only glimpsed views from the access to Rehoboth will be appreciated

- 4.27. The medium range views (photographs 4 and 5) show a position where the landscape framework does not afford any views of the marquee structure.



4

From approaches to the east the mature trees alongside the access road to Warren Farm, are such that there are limited or no views of the marquee structure



5

From medium and longer range approaches to the west there are no views or appreciation of the marquee structure

- 4.28. In this way and given temporary siting it is, in the terms of CP3(a) are of “an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout and built form” so that they do not harm the character of the locality.
- 4.29. In the Officer report considering the buildings in 2017 it was noted that the land is on the outskirts of Wokingham and is “not identified as being of high sensitivity in the adopted Landscape Character Assessment SPG”. This has been reiterated by the Landscape Officer considering the 2024 application.
- 4.30. On this basis and whilst having regard to the principles of CP11 and related policy TB23 it was considered that no material harm would result.
- 4.31. On the planning balance and given the temporary nature of the marquee as well as their clustering within the landscape framework, there is no prima face conflict with relevant planning policy. In making this assertion, we have regard to landscape designation and the Character Assessment.

**Other material considerations**

- 4.32. The other material considerations are that the development is wholly related and essential to the ongoing progress of JAC and its work as a Charitable organisation. There would be no material increase in parking or traffic onto Forest Road and indeed this position has been acknowledged as acceptable.

**5.0 Summary - the planning balance**

- 5.1. By way of summary, the applicant sets out the following:

- The functioning of the JAC Charity is an important material planning consideration, in the determination of this application. It is long standing and acknowledged to be of importance in the Borough. This is reflected in previous officer appraisals.
- The temporary siting of a marquee is absolutely essential to the fundraising for the Charity and this is a material consideration to which significant weight must reasonably be attached. The proposal is wholly policy compliant and is sited within the complex of built development as has been expressed as being desirable by the local planning authority. It is shown that the visual impact of the proposed structure is wholly acceptable.

- In making this application, the refusal of the permission and subsequent discussions have been taken into account. For clarification, the period of siting has been changed and thus meets with the aspirations of the Landscape Officer and local authority more generally. Further details pertaining to use and the practicalities of dismantling have been set out so as to guide the local planning authority.
  - There is no material effect in terms of highways, flood risk or any other material considerations. In light of all of these matters, the development is acceptable, having regard to prevailing planning policies and on its individual merits.
- 5.2. Having regard to the foregoing, the land use and buildings remain as sustainable and planning permission should be granted.