

Retention of stables
(1 triple unit, 3 double units and 1 single unit)

Malmsbury Estate
Remenham Hill
Henley-on-Thames
RG9 3HN

DESIGN, ACCESS, PLANNING AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

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Client: Rilex International Ltd

Date: June 2025

Ref: WOK-211-2-NM

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Southern Planning Practice Ltd is instructed by Rilex International Ltd to submit a planning application for 'Retention of stables' at Malmsbury Estate, Remenham Hill, Henley-on-Thames.
- 1.2 The Malmsbury Estate is the site of an established polo facility, which supports a high goal polo team ("Park Place"). The facilities include a large stable building, polo pitch, polo arena and exercise track, all permitted under planning application ref: 162288.
- 1.3 The Malmsbury Estate forms part of a larger estate holding along with Park Place (a Grade II listed building and home to the Borodin family), areas of parkland and woodland, and the Park Place Stables complex, which comprises an American Barn, a show jumping arena and other associated equine structures, including rows of stables either side of the American Barn.
- 1.4 The entire estate holding is situated within the Grade II* Registered Park and Garden (RPG) at Park Place, and Temple Combe, which also includes other land and properties in third party ownership. It is also within the Green Belt. But not within the Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area.
- 1.5 The Park Place Stables complex accommodates the family's own horses, although is also used to accommodate polo horses. It includes two rows of lawful stable buildings (a total of 24 individual booths) located either side (east and west) of the American Barn.
- 1.6 The high goal polo team competes at national and international level, which requires significant resource, as well as appropriate infrastructure / facilities. The polo season runs from May – August. During this time approximately 120 horses are kept on site, the majority of which are polo horses. During the winter, most of the polo horses are put out to pasture at farms in West Sussex. A small number of polo horses are kept on site, for winter practice, along with the family's own horses.
- 1.7 The stables subject of this application have been in situ since 2021 / 2022. They are used to accommodate stable polo horses during the polo season. They comprise a row of 1 x triple and 3 x double stable units (a total of 9 booths), as well as an additional single unit (10 booths in total). They are located along the northern boundary of the estate, just inside the entrance off the A4130 ('White Hill') and form part of the existing group of equestrian buildings located within this part of the RPG (see Fig. 1 below).
- 1.8 The row of stables are sited up against / back to back with an existing row of lawful stables situated to the east of the American Barn, mirroring the same number and type of units (i.e. one triple unit and three double units). The additional single unit is situated at the southern end of the lawful row of stables on the western side of the American Barn.



Fig. 1 – Aerial view showing the location of the stables subject of this application (shown red) in relation to the existing equestrian buildings and polo facilities

- 1.9 There are individually listed buildings and structures within the RPG, including the principal dwelling Park Place (Grade II), a late 17th century obelisk (Grade II) which is situated on raised ground near to Park Place, and a Barn at Park Place Farm (Grade II). There are also listed buildings outside of the site (to the north), on the opposite side of the A4130 – Craigmore House, Remenham House (listed as Remenham Cottage) and Remenham Hill House.
- 1.10 There are no public rights of way within the estate (or the RPG).
- 1.11 The estate has a lengthy and complex planning history (as outlined in section 3.0 of this statement).
- 1.12 In March 2020, a joint appeal for two proposals were dismissed. This included a new American barn and permanent outdoor arena within the same part of the RPG as the stables subject to this application. Within the appeal decision, reference was made to a number of unauthorised structures that had been identified by the LPA within the RPG at that time, which had caused uncertainty about the lawfulness of these developments. All of these items have since been confirmed as being lawful following the submission of a series of lawful development certificate applications (see Planning History section at 3.0). Analysis of the appeal decision is detailed in Section 4.0.

- 1.13 One of the lawful development certificates granted relates to building operations comprising 5 no. linked portacabins (Portacabin A) and a shed, situated on the eastern part of the estate (and also within the RPG). As part of the proposal to retain the stables, it is proposed to remove these 5 linked portacabins and the shed as a 'trade-off'. The removal of the portacabins and restoration of the land to grazed pasture will enhance the character and appearance of the RPG and therefore provide a significant public benefit.



Fig. 2 – The portacabin buildings proposed to be traded-off (front elevation)



Fig. 3 – The portacabin buildings proposed to be traded-off (rear elevation)

- 1.14 The gross external volume of the portacabins and shed is very similar to the retained stables. Removal of the buildings would therefore also result in no net increase in buildings within the Green Belt (although equestrian buildings for open sport / recreation are not inappropriate development within the Green Belt).
- 1.15 The retained stables are modest in size and are low-key structures. Their timber construction and equestrian design is appropriate to their location and proposed use, and being adjacent to other existing lawful / permitted equestrian structures are very well related to the existing group of buildings already in situ within this part of the estate.
- 1.16 Consequently, they would not have a harmful or unacceptable visual impact on the countryside, or the character or significance of this part of the RPG, or the openness of the Green Belt.
- 1.17 Nor would they affect the setting of any nearby listed buildings or neighbouring properties.
- 1.18 The application submission comprises the following plans and documents:
- Site Location Plan
 - Block Plan
 - Proposed plan and elevations of Stables Block A (single unit)
 - Proposed plan and elevations of Stables Block C (row of 1xtriple and 3 x double units))
 - Proposed trade off plan (portacabins and shed for stables)
 - This Design, Access and Planning and Heritage Statement
 - Appendix 1 – Listing description of the Registered Park and Garden at Park Place, and Temple Combe
 - Appendix 2 – Appeal decision dated 11 March 2020 (ref: 3224323 / 3224329)
- 1.19 This statement describes the site and its surroundings and the heritage context, then provides an overview of the relevant planning history and analysis of the 2020 appeal decision, before outlining the proposal and relevant national and local plan policies. It then assesses the rationale for the development, taking into account the prevailing planning policies, relevant planning history, inspectors conclusions, and heritage considerations weighed against the public benefits. Design, landscape impact and green belt implications are also assessed. The summary conclusions are then detailed.

2.0 Site and surroundings

- 2.1 The Park Place / Malmsbury Estate is a large country estate situated within the countryside at Remenham Hill, to the south of the A4130 and east of Henley-on-Thames.

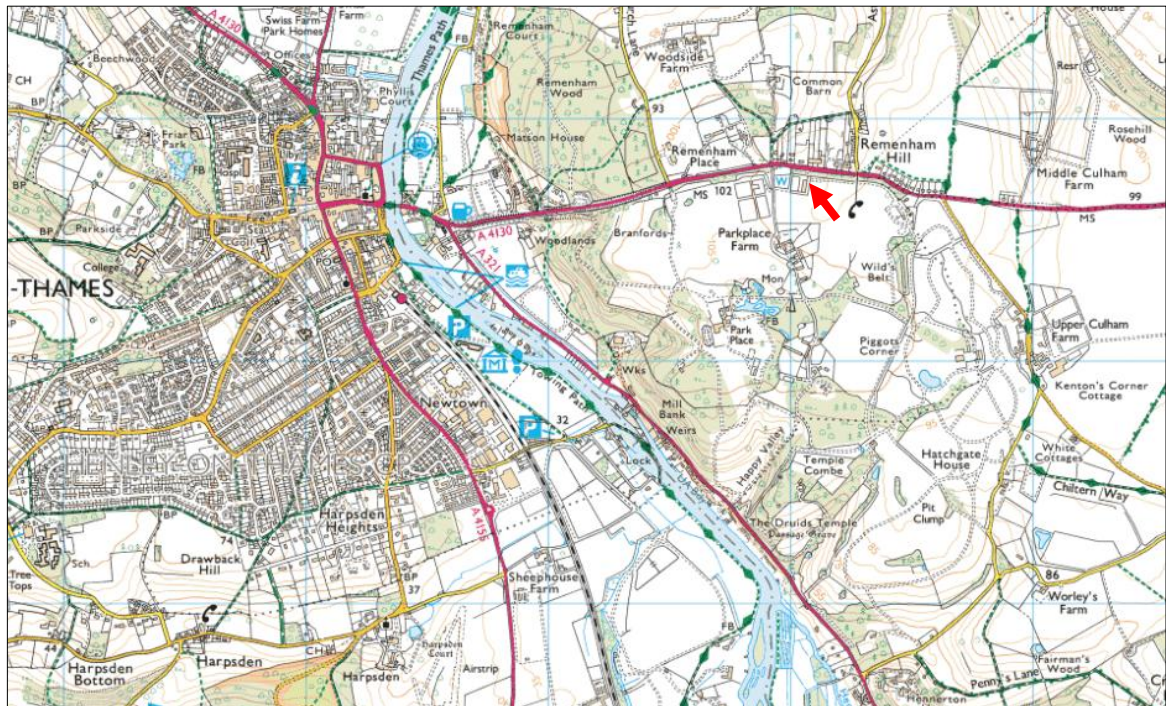


Fig 4. – Location map

- 2.2 Ownership of the estate is split into two separate titles, although operates and is managed as one single unit. The applicants, Rilex International Ltd, own the north eastern part of the estate (formerly Malmsbury Farm) where the polo facility is located and where the row of retained stables are located. The single unit is within the other title, which is owned by Durio Company Ltd (requiring notice to be served).
- 2.3 The estate is located on a plateau on the eastern side of the Thames Valley. From the A4130, the land rises slightly southwards up towards Park Place. It also undulates gently in a west to east direction. Past Park Place, the land drops away quite sharply to the south / south west, down to the River Thames, on a part of the estate / RPG known as Happy Valley.
- 2.4 As you enter the estate from the A4130 the land has an open aspect. There are individual trees, giving it a parkland feel. Further south and east (and around the perimeter of the estate) there are areas of woodland and tree belts, which provide relief, as well as screen some of the buildings within the estate.
- 2.5 A 45m high telecommunications mast (with various dishes and other equipment attached) extends above the woodland on the ridge line and is clearly visible.

- 2.6 The Park Place Stables complex and the polo facility are situated on the northern and north eastern part of the estate. As the aerial photograph in Fig 1 shows, the equestrian buildings are grouped together on the northern part of the estate. These include the American Barn and show jumping arena, two rows of stable units, muck heap and storage shed, a horsewalker and a large (quadrangle) stable building. It also includes the retained stables (subject of this application). Beyond this group of the buildings to the east / south-east / south lies the polo practice pitch, the polo exercise track and the polo arena.
- 2.7 All of the estate is situated within the Park Place, and Temple Combe RPG. It is also within the Green Belt.
- 2.8 There are a number of listed buildings and structures located within the Estate, including the principal dwelling, Park Place (Grade II), a late 17th century obelisk (Grade II) and a Barn at Park Place Farm (Grade II). There are also listed buildings outside of the site (to the north), on the opposite side of the A4130 – Craigmere Houe, Remenham House (listed as Remenham Cottage), and Remenham Hill House.
- 2.9 The most significant part of the estate / RPG is the area known as Happy Valley, which extends southwards from Park Place down to the River Thames, and includes a listed grotto and druids temple, as well as Conway Bridge.
- 2.10 There are no public rights of way across the site or through the wider estate holding.
- 2.11 There are several entrances leading into the estate.
- 2.12 The main entrance to the principal dwelling (Park Place) is situated along White's Hill.
- 2.13 Diary Lane is a private lane that runs from the A4130 into the estate. It provides a secondary access into the estate, as well access to some of the properties that are in separate ownership. It was originally a farm track to Park Farm (and later to a gasometer and reservoir). Its purpose was therefore as a 'trade entrance' to serve the working part of the estate and not an historic approach to the house.
- 2.14 Entrance to the equestrian and polo facility is via a gated access off the A4130, a short distance to the east of Diary Lane.
- 2.15 In the 20th and 21st centuries, there have been a number of previous uses on the estate, highlighting the evolving nature in changes in ownership and usage over the years. The application site (where the retained stables are located) was previously the site of a Turkey Farm. The north-eastern part of the estate, where the polo facility is located, was previously a golf course (Aspect Park), which operated between 1988 – 2005. Prior to being returned to use as a dwelling (following the grant of planning permission in 2007), Park Place was a school and had lain vacant for number of years before being restored.

- 2.16 There have, therefore, been a number of previous uses / iterations of the land and buildings, particularly the north eastern part, and as a result of this ownership of the estate became fragmented.
- 2.17 The purchase of Park Place in 2011, followed by the purchase of the Malmsbury Estate (Land on the south side of Remenham Hill, Remenham) in 2017, enabled the estate to be reconciled and brought back into use as a single unit and under single management.

painted gate piers. From here the drive curves up the steep hillside through woodland, with views west across the river towards Henley, opening out at the top, 400m north-west of the house, into parkland lying on the plateau. Several further drives give access to the house, crossing the parkland from the east, south-east and north-east, entering off the A4130 and the lane to the east of the park

- ❖ **PRINCIPAL BUILDING:** Park Place (Thomas Cundy 1870, listed grade II), built of rendered brick in French Renaissance style, stands on the site of an C18 building which was badly damaged by fire c 1870, possibly incorporating parts of the C18 work.
- ❖ **GARDEN AND PLEASURE GROUNDS:** The gardens surround the house to the west, south and east, with pleasure grounds leading away to the south towards the river:
 - Terraces to the west of the house
 - The view down the grassy Happy Valley (now, 1998, a golf course) is flanked by mature trees, mostly beeches, with Conway Bridge (architect Thomas Pitt, first Lord Camelford, engineer Rev Humphrey Gainsborough, brother of Thomas Gainsborough, 1763, listed grade II) standing c 375m south of the Grotto, framing a view of the river beyond
- ❖ **PARK:** The extensive park, largely laid out during the later C18 by General Conway, surrounds the inner core of the gardens and pleasure grounds. Areas of open parkland, many containing clumps and specimen trees, are enclosed by belts of trees and woodland, the latter particularly found to the west of the site. The north-east section, incorporated in the C19, has been overlaid by a golf course (late C20), the remainder being a mixture of arable and pasture

In the 2020 appeal (see section's 3.0 and 4.0), the inspector opined that:

- *Grade II* parks and gardens are particularly important sites and of more than special interest.*
- *The significance of the RPG at Park Place is derived mainly from the 18th and 19th century gardens and pleasure grounds that surround the listed country house, as well as the extensive landscaped park that was laid out during the later 18th century by General Conway and the tree planting by Robert Marnock in the late 19th century. The open parkland and trees, including belts of trees, boundary trees and woodland, as well as its largely tranquil character, are integral to an appreciation and understanding of this designed landscape and the intentions of the designers and those who employed them. These features make an important contribution to the historic interest of this RPG.*
- **Over time, there have been numerous changes to this RPG.** *These include the erection of a number of buildings and the construction of two golf courses. (The golf course in the north eastern part of the park has since been replaced by polo/equine facilities.) Some of these changes, such as the removal of golf course bunkers and other inappropriate works, have assisted in restoring parts of the parkland. However, in all likelihood, most of the buildings that have been constructed in the north eastern part of the RPG since the latter part of the 20th century would have had some adverse effects upon its open parkland character. Whilst some golf course activity would have disturbed the tranquillity of the parkland the same is likely to be true of some of the polo activities, especially during the summer when practice matches take place.*

- *Both appeal sites are close to the northern edge of the RPG. The belt of trees growing alongside appeal site A contributes to the sense of boundary planting to this designated heritage asset and the space around the blockwork and asbestos roof building is part of the open parkland. Although the stables, equine facilities and the boundary fencing on appeal site B could be considered to convey a sense of partition from the parkland, the spaces around the buildings (including the areas where the 24 loose boxes have been erected) assist in retaining a semblance of the open attributes of this part of the RPG. Both appeal sites contribute to the significance (historic interest) of the RPG.*

Listed Buildings

- 3.6 The location of the listed buildings with the RPG (and beyond its perimeter) is shown in Fig. 6 overleaf.
- 3.7 Within the RPG, these include Park Place (Grade II), the Obelisk in the grounds of Park Place (Grade II) and Barn at Park Place Farm (Grade II). The location / setting of these buildings, in particular the Obelisk, are not impacted by the proposal – see the inspectors conclusions in 2020 appeal decision (as set out in Section 4.0).
- 3.8 The listed buildings / structures situated in Happy Valley (e.g. the Grotto, Druids Temple and Conway Bridge) are also sited within a different part of the estate, where, due their relative distances and the topography of the land, have no bearing or relationship with the proposal, sited on the northern part of the estate.

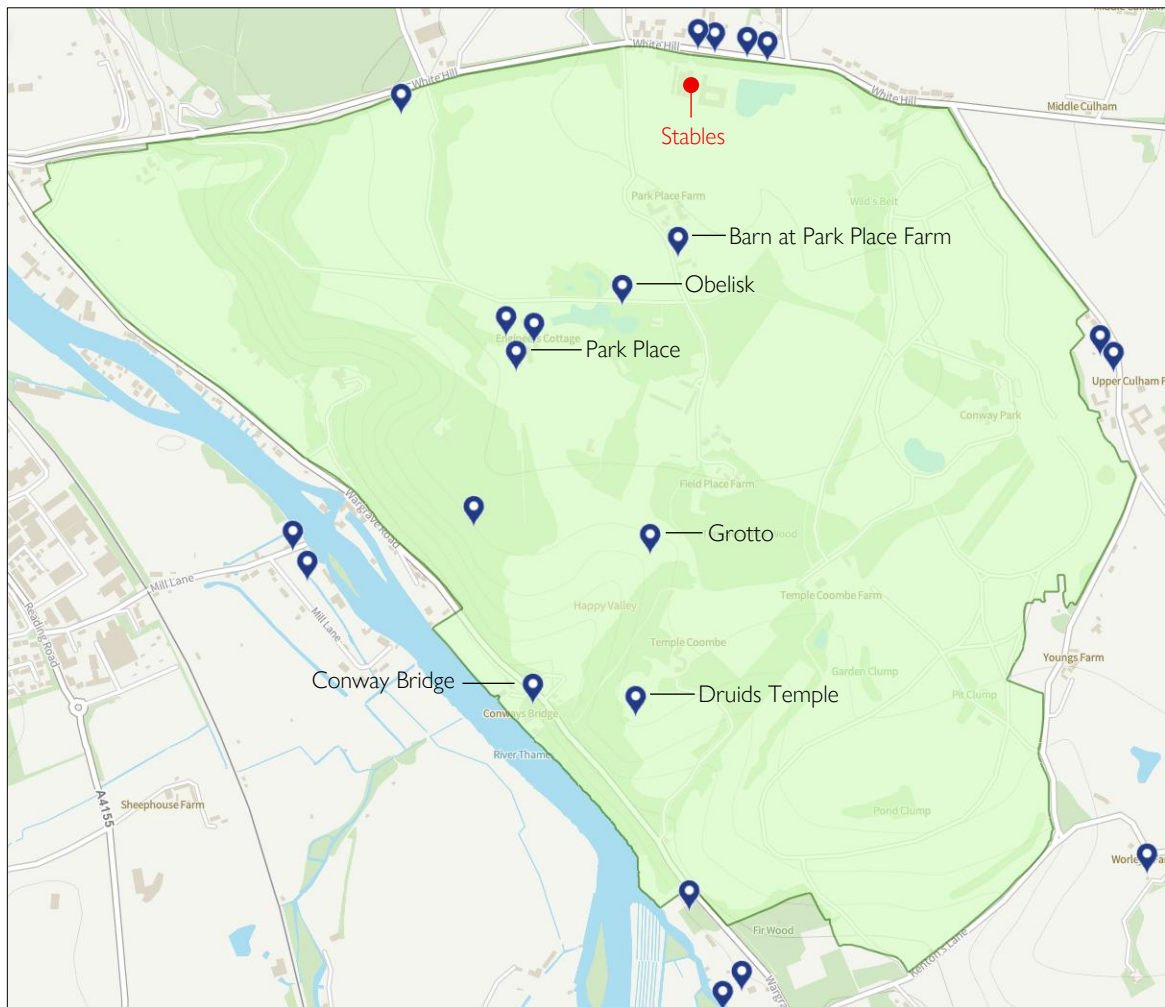


Fig. 6 – Map showing location of listed buildings within / around the RPG

- 3.9 The listed buildings situated to the north of the RPG (beyond the perimeter / along the northern side of the A4130) comprise a series of dwellings fronting the A4130. They are: Craigmore House, renamed as The White House (Grade II), Remenham Cottage, renamed as Remenham House (Grade II), Remenham Hill House and Remenham Hill Terrace (Grade II).
- 3.10 The northern boundary of the estate where it borders the A4130 is well defined with established vegetation (tree and hedging). As such, views from these listed buildings / properties southwards into the estate are largely screened and at best obscured.
- 3.11 Craigmore House is situated opposite the equestrian entrance into the estate. This permits views southwards from the building into and across the estate / RPG, although there is a large pair of solid Corten steel entrance gates set on gate piers, which limits views of the equestrian buildings behind (including the retained stables subject of this application, the lawful row of stables and the American barn). Although only the roofs of these equestrian buildings are visible. Because of the low profile of the retained stable buildings, whilst visible, they do not screen, block or interrupt the view of the estate / RPG from Craigmore House. Their impact on the setting of this listed building is therefore minimal.

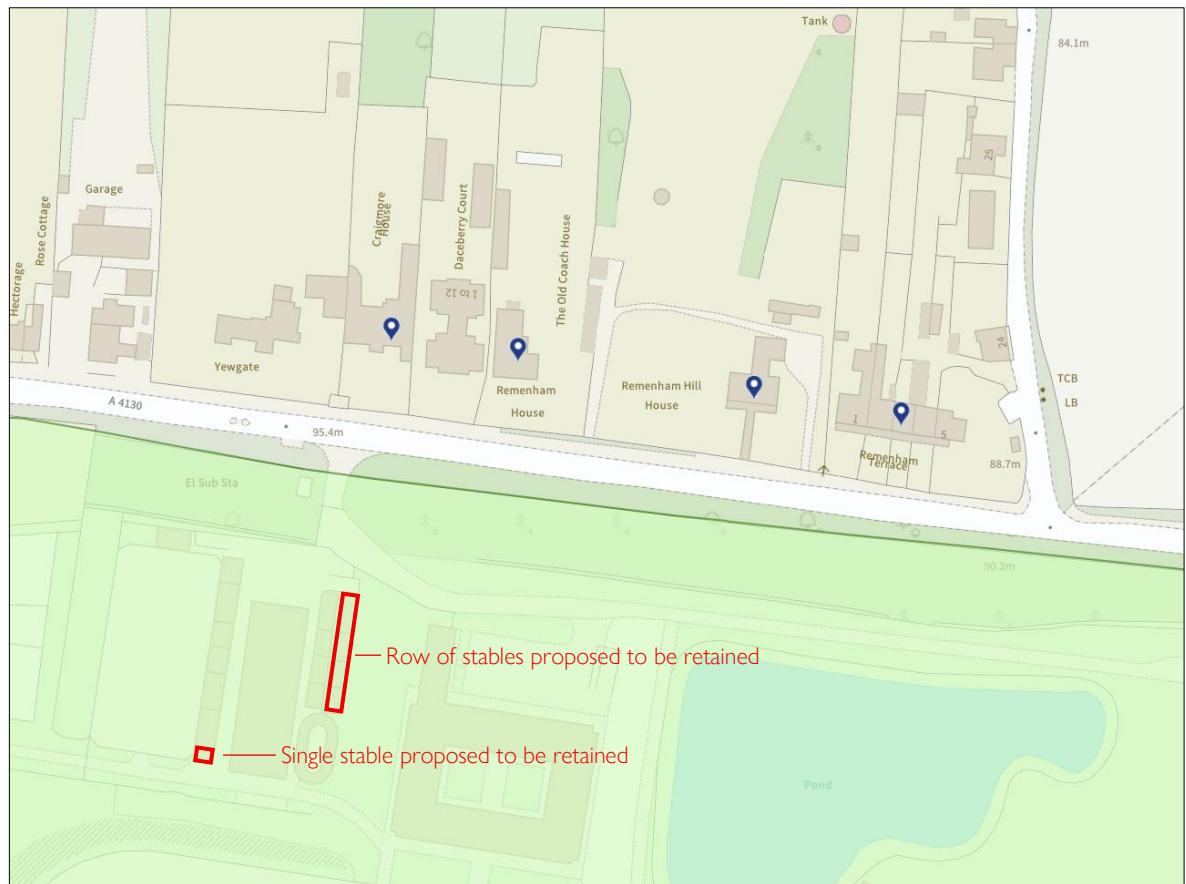


Fig. 7 – Map showing the location of the listed buildings to the north of the site (in relation to the retained stables)

4.0 Planning History

4.1 The estate has a lengthy and complex planning history.

4.2 Park Place was in use as a residential school until 1988 and then the premises lay vacant. Following the grant of planning and listed building consent in 2007, permission was granted for it to be restored to a single country dwelling.

Application ref:	Description:	Decision / Date:
062150	Proposed change of use of residential school to residential dwelling with ancillary accommodation.	Approved; 13 April 2007

4.3 Around the same time, as part of a wider masterplan to improve and enhance neglected parts of the estate, permission was sought to consolidate a number of existing residential dwellings within the estate, including the erection of 5 new dwellings (in exchange for the demolition of 8 dwellings).

081224	Outline application for the demolition of 8 dwellings and erection of 5 new dwellings. Change of use of 3 dwellings to form 2 boathouses and guest accommodation. Conversion of 2 dwellings to form 1 dwelling. Alterations to the barns and the bungalow to form a single residential unit plus alterations and extensions to existing buildings	Approved; 09 December 2008
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4.4 The case officers report for 081224 outlined the benefits of the scheme as follows:

The overall effect of the masterplan would be to:

- Reduce the number of dwellings from 22 to 18
- Reduce the volume of buildings from 47,756 cubic meters to 42,707 cubic metres
- Reduce the footprint of buildings from 8,346 cubic metres to 6,585 cubic metres
- Reduce the area of hardstanding from 14,554 cubic metres to 4,150 cubic metres
- Reduce the number of access points onto the highway from 10 to 8
- Reduce the amount of lawful on-site car parking and the amount of traffic generation, by reduction in residential units and the removal of the golf club, as well as former residential school.

4.5 This was followed by the submission of a reserved matters application for one the 5 new dwellings (known as Aspect West – New Dairy Farm).

101748	Reserved Matters application on outline consent O/2008/1353 for the erection of one dwelling (Aspect West - New Dairy Farm) Reserved Matters to be considered for the siting, design (including floorspace, height massing, internal layout & external appearance), access and landscaping.	Approved; 4 August 2010
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- 4.6 The above permission was not implemented so permission was sought for an extension of time in 2013.

130981	Application to extend implementation date for planning consent RM/2010/1243 for a further 3 years (Reserved Matters application on outline consent O/2008/1353 for the erection of one dwelling (Aspect West- New Dairy Farm) Reserved Matters to be considered for the siting, design (including floorspace, height massing, internal layout & external appearance), access and landscaping.)	Approved; 24 July 2013
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- 4.7 At the time planning permission was granted for the change of use from residential school to a dwelling with ancillary accommodation in 2007 (062150), there were several buildings on the application site which had been used for chicken / turkey farming and a former maintenance building for the adjacent golf course. Those buildings lay at the edge of a golf course – see aerial photograph from 2009 below.



Fig 8 - Aerial photograph (2009)

- 4.8 After grants of planning permission in 2014, those buildings were replaced by a new equestrian building (the American barn) containing loose boxes, ancillary equestrian facilities and a store, and a temporary outdoor riding arena.

140620	Proposed change of use of land for construction of a temporary riding arena for a period of 12 months	Approved: 08 April 2014
141560	Proposed erection of a new barn to include equestrian use.	Approved: 21 November 2014

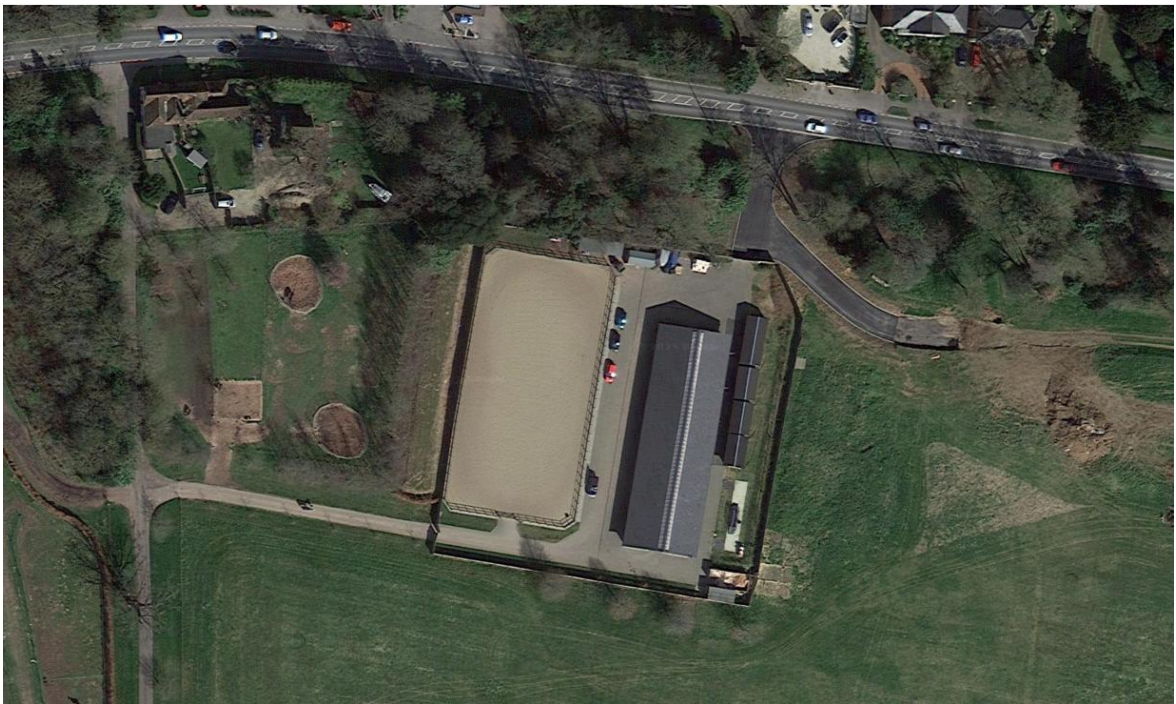


Fig. 9 – Aerial photograph (2017)

- 4.9 An oval shaped horsewalker was also approved in 2017.

172271	Full application for the construction of an oval horse walker	Approved: 23 November 2017
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- 4.10 In December 2016, planning permission was granted for the creation of a polo facility for private use, comprising of a polo field, exercise track, stable block, all weather practice area, summer pavilion and widening of existing access onto A4130 on land to the south and east of the appeal site. A large part of the site was previously used as a golf course.

162288	Full application for the proposed creation of a polo facility for private use, comprising of a polo field, exercise track, stable block, all weather practice area, summer pavilion and widening of existing access onto A4130.	Approved: 08 December 2016
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4.11 The polo facility was built out during 2017 / 2018 and completed by 2019

4.12 Part of the justification for allowing the polo facility was the trade-off for not implementing the planning permission for the new dwelling permitted under 101748 and 130981. The case officer report states:

"The volume of the stables (720sqm gross internal floorspace) is much less than the approved scheme for the house (1125sqm gross internal floorspace) thus reducing the overall built volume within the Green Belt."

4.13 In 2018, planning permission was refused for the demolition of an existing outbuilding and replacement with grooms accommodation with a players gym, and also a new American barn and permanent outdoor arena. Both decisions were the subject of a joint appeal, which was determined in March 2020.

182327	Full planning application for the proposed erection of grooms accommodation with a players gym following the demolition of existing outbuilding.	Refused: 16 Nov 2018 Appeal dismissed; 11 March 2020
182524	Full planning permission for the erection of a stable (consisting of 24 boxes, tack room, feed room and storage) with outdoor area.	Refused: 19 December 2014 Appeal dismissed; 11 March 2020

4.14 A copy of the appeal decision is attached at Appendix 2.

4.15 Analysis of the appeal decision and the relevance to the current proposal is discussed in Section 4.0 below.

LDC's

- 4.16 A number of items and structures that were identified by the LPA during the appeal proceedings as either being unauthorised or at variance to the permissions granted were subject to a series of lawful development certificate applications submitted in 2024 / 2025. Lawful development certificates have been granted in each case (in one instance a split decision was issued):

Application ref:	Description:	Decision / Date:
250527	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for a metal framed barn clad with green profile sheeting, used to store hay and feed.	Approved; 29 April 2025
250526	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for an agricultural building.	Approved; 12 May 2025
242605	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for an open fronted shed.	Approved; 31 March 2025
250370	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for building operations comprising 5 no. linked portacabins (Portacabin A) and a shed on the land	Split decision - Portacabins A and shed Granted; 18 Feb 2025
242612	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for a change of use to form groom's residential accommodation.	Approved; 20 Dec 2024
242629	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the erection of a building, raised paved terrace and hard paving.	Approved 18 Dec 2024
242628	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the erection of 4no. marquee frames and associated hardstanding	Approved 11 Dec 2024
242606	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for additional gravel tracks, asphalt driveway, pavilion parking area and rubberised matting link way.	Approved 09 Dec 2024

242597	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the erection of 10no. wooden stable buildings (comprising a total of 24no. individual stables), concrete enclosure and timber shed.	Approved 09 Dec 2024
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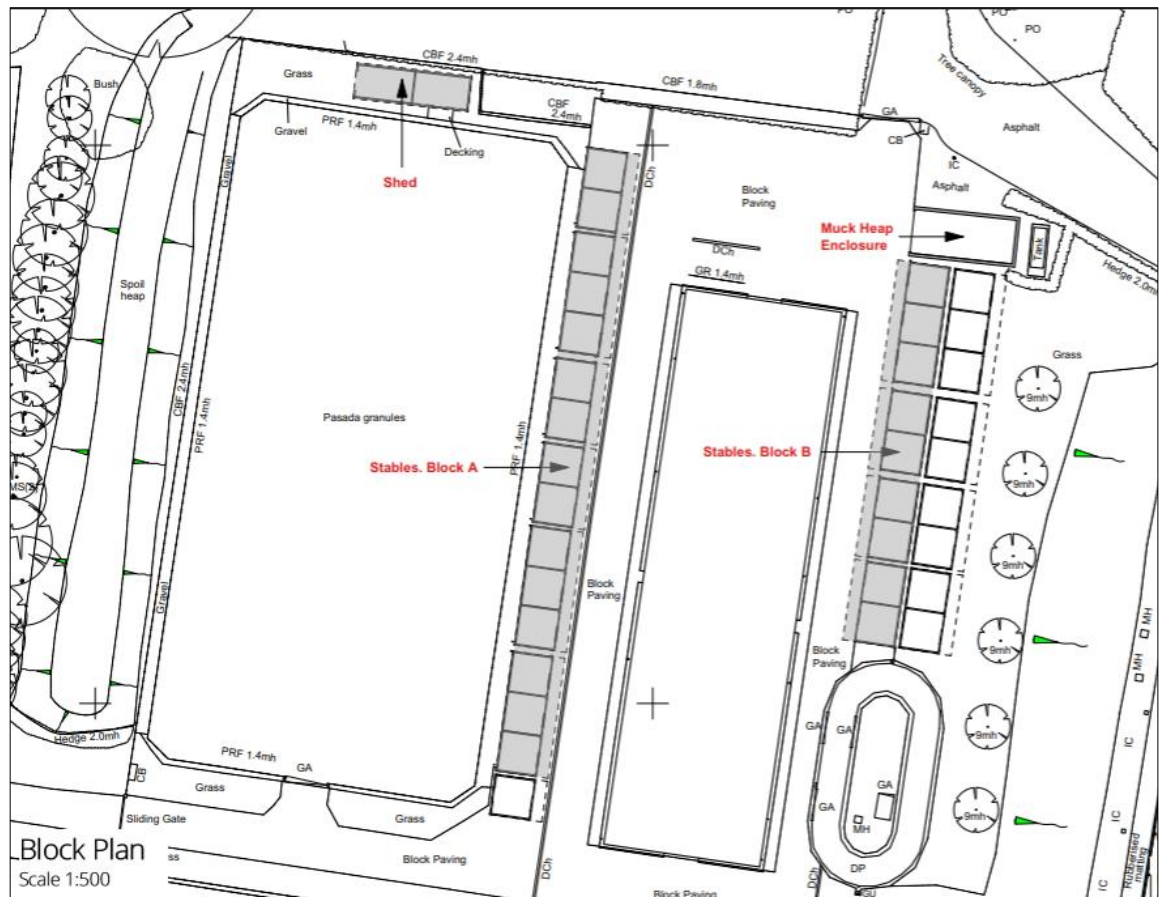


Fig. 7 - Approved Block plan (242597)

242603	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the installation of a sewage treatment plant and power unit.	Approved 05 Dec 2024
242602	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the erection of a pump house building.	Approved 05 Dec 2024
242607	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the erection of 2 no. pony lines	Approved 29 Nov 2024
242596	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the construction of 2 no. viewing mounds.	Approved 29 Nov 2024

5.0 2020 Appeal Decision

- 5.1 The conclusions of the appeal inspector are relevant to the consideration of this application. The most relevant comments are as follows:

Preliminary matters (paragraphs 2 – 8)

- *The appeal sites lie within the Metropolitan Green Belt (GB) and form part of the Grade II* Registered Park and Garden (RPG) at Park Place, and Temple Combe. They also lie within the settings of various Grade II listed buildings. There is a lengthy and rather complex planning history to this part of the RPG.*
- *Although the appeal sites are in separate ownership they are managed jointly by Rilex International Ltd and are used by the residents of Park Place house (the Borodin family) for equine purposes. This includes training facilities and stabling to support a high goal polo team.*

Planning policy (paragraphs 14 – 15)

- *The development plan includes the Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy (CS) 2010 and the Wokingham Borough Council Managing Development Delivery Document (MDD) 2014. Given the main issue that I have identified above, the most relevant development plan policy to the determination of these appeals is MDD policy TB24 (designated heritage assets).*
- *The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is an important material consideration that carries substantial weight in these appeals. MDD policy TB24 does not include the 'public benefits' balance contained within section 16 of the Framework. This would reduce the weight to be given to any conflict with MDD policy TB24.*

Main issue (paragraph 9)

- *The effect of the proposals on the significance of the RPG and various listed buildings and whether any harm would be outweighed by any public benefits.*

The Main Issue - The RPG, the obelisk and Remenham House (paragraphs 16 – 19)

- *Grade II* parks and gardens are particularly important sites and of more than special interest.*
- *The significance of the RPG at Park Place is derived mainly from the 18th and 19th century gardens and pleasure grounds that surround the listed country house, as well as the extensive landscaped park that was laid out during the later 18th century by General Conway and the tree planting by Robert Marnock in the late 19th century. The open parkland and trees, including belts of trees, boundary trees and woodland, as well as its largely tranquil character, are integral to an appreciation and understanding of this designed landscape and the intentions of the designers and those who employed them. These features make an important contribution to the historic interest of this RPG.*

- *Over time, there have been numerous changes to this RPG. These include the erection of a number of buildings and the construction of two golf courses. (The golf course in the north eastern part of the park has since been replaced by polo/equine facilities.) Some of these changes, such as the removal of golf course bunkers and other inappropriate works, have assisted in restoring parts of the parkland. However, in all likelihood, **most of the buildings that have been constructed in the north eastern part of the RPG since the latter part of the 20th century would have had some adverse effects upon its open parkland character.** Whilst some golf course activity would have disturbed the tranquillity of the parkland the same is likely to be true of some of the polo activities, especially during the summer when practice matches take place.*
- *Both appeal sites are close to the northern edge of the RPG. The belt of trees growing alongside appeal site A contributes to the sense of boundary planting to this designated heritage asset and the space around the blockwork and asbestos roof building is part of the open parkland. Although the stables, equine facilities and the boundary fencing on appeal site B could be considered to convey a sense of partition from the parkland, the spaces around the buildings (including the areas where the 24 loose boxes have been erected) assist in retaining a semblance of the open attributes of this part of the RPG. Both appeal sites contribute to the significance (historic interest) of the RPG.*

Impact on Appeal B scheme (paragraphs 30 – 35)

- *The proposed (replacement / re-sited) outdoor showing jumping arena would result in a very minor adverse impact on the significance of the RPG.*
- *The proposed American Barn would measure 60m x 12.6m x 5.5m (ridge height). It would be a sizeable new building. Given the proximity to the main road and the existing equine facilities alongside, there would be no loss of tranquillity. **The conflict with the open parkland character would, though, amount to less than substantial harm to the significance of the RPG. This would be somewhere towards the lower end of the sliding scale of harm.** The proposal would conflict with the provisions of MDD Policy TB24.*
- *The proposed development would be seen in views of Remenham House when looking north east from along Dairy Lane. Seeing a development does not by itself amount to a harmful impact and the proposed show jumping arena would not distract from an appreciation or understanding of the significance of this neighbouring listed building.*
- *However, **the siting, height and mass of the proposed American barn would interrupt, if not obscure, a view of the upper part of the principal elevation of Remenham House.** Whilst other (roadside) views of the principal elevation would remain, when viewed from Dairy Lane **the proposed new building would diminish the ability to appreciate some of the special architectural qualities of this listed building from within the RPG. This would amount to less than substantial harm to the significance of this listed building, with harm at the lower end of any sliding scale.** The proposed building could also interrupt some views of the RPG from the upper floor windows in this listed house and diminish an appreciation of its rural surrounds. This would also conflict with the provisions of MDD policy TB24.*
- *The proposed development would entail a minor change to the setting of the listed obelisk without interrupting or intruding into any important views of this designated heritage asset. **Whilst the***

proposed American barn could be seen from this designated heritage asset, it would be a considerable distance from the obelisk and would form a very minor element in the extensive views from this remnant of the church spire. The proposal would not harm the ability to appreciate or understand the significance of this listed building and would preserve its setting.

Other listed buildings (paragraph 36)

- *There is nothing before me to demonstrate that the appeal sites contribute to the significance of any other listed building or that the proposed developments would harm their heritage interest. The proposals would preserve the settings of all other listed buildings that have been identified to me.*

Public benefits (paragraphs 37 – 45)

- ***In undertaking the 'heritage balance' I must take into account any public benefits of the proposals.** The appellants have argued that these comprise: furthering the development of a high goal polo team, its ability to compete at sporting events and the spectacle of the sport of polo; enhancing the Borodin family's enjoyment of equestrian activities, including competing at show jumping events; maintaining equestrian use and allowing this part of the RPG to be managed as a single unit; the removal of an unsightly storage building; better supervision and care of horses that are kept on the site and; a reduction in vehicular traffic.*
- *Whilst not planning policy, the Government's Planning Practice Guidance, amongst other things, states that public benefits should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit. **However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits.***
- *Within the terms of the planning permission for polo activities within the RPG, the public are precluded from attending practice matches etc., Nevertheless, **some members of the public are interested in playing/watching/following polo, including attending polo matches elsewhere. Additional serious competition within this sport, through the involvement of more/competitive teams, could enhance public enjoyment. There has been very considerable investment in developing polo facilities at Park Place and I note that the polo team which is based at Park Place is achieving much sporting success. The proposed polo facilities could deliver some public benefit. I afford this some limited weight.***
- ***The removal of the existing storage building (appeal A) would help restore the open character of this part of the parkland and, in so doing, be of public benefit.** However, I have found above that this is a rather discrete building and the proposed replacement would harm the significance of the RPG. This proposal would not amount to a public benefit.*
- *The proposed development would, for a temporary period, help support the construction industry. There could also be benefits in terms of additional staff employed on the sites and some increased spending in local shops and services. This would comprise a public benefit which carries limited weight.*

The Planning / Heritage Balance and Conclusion on the Main Issue (paragraphs 46 – 47)

- *When the less than substantial harm to the significance of the RPG that I have found in appeal A is weighed with the public benefits the balance tips against granting planning permission. When the less than substantial harm to the significance of the RPG that I have found in appeal B and the less than substantial harm to the significance of Remenham House is weighed with the public benefits the balance tips more heavily against granting permission.*
- *I conclude on the main issue that the proposals (appeals A and B) would harm the significance of the RPG and the significance of Remenham House (appeal B only) and this harm would not be outweighed by the public benefits.*

Other matters – Green Belt (paragraphs 48 – 56)

- *Given my findings above regarding the main issue, my decisions do not turn on the outcome of the other issues that I identified at the Hearing. Whilst my decisions could therefore be ‘silent’ on these matters, the main parties have made detailed representations regarding the impact upon the GB and the character and appearance of the area. For completeness, I set out below a summary of my findings in respect of these other matters.*
- *CS policy CP12 and MDD policy TB01, which relate to the GB, were based on the now cancelled PPG2 and an earlier version of the Framework. In the context of these appeals, this would reduce (to a limited extent) the weight to be given to any conflict with these policies.*
- ***The construction of a new building/provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport within the GB is one of the specified exceptions to inappropriate development within the GB, as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the GB and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.***
- *The proposed American barn (appeal B) would considerably increase the number of horses that could be stabled in connection with the polo activities operating from within the RPG. I note the LPA’s argument that such an increase would be at odds **with the terms of the 2016 permission for a polo facility**. Whilst it could ultimately fall to the courts to interpret the bounds of that permission, **it does not appear to restrict the number of horses that could be stabled or kept on the land.***
- ***I agree with the appellant that the proposed American barn would, in the context of GB policy, comprise an appropriate facility for outdoor sport.** However, its siting, size and height would not preserve the openness of the GB. It would comprise inappropriate development within the GB.*

Other matters – countryside / landscape (paragraphs 57 – 60)

- *The proposed outdoor arena (appeal B) would not entail the erection of any buildings or structures and would retain the space to the east of the paddock. Although the perimeter fence and jumps would be unsympathetic paraphernalia within the countryside, this element of the proposal would not have any significant adverse effect upon the character or appearance of the landscape.*
- *In contrast, the proposed American barn would be more prominent in the landscape and would diminish the sense of openness between the western flank wall of the existing barn and the*

paddock beyond. It would detract from the character and appearance of the local landscape and conflict with CS policy CP11 and MDD policy 21.

- *The above noted harm to the character and appearance of the landscape weighs against an approval but **would not, by itself, be sufficient to justify withholding permission.** Moreover, there is nothing to demonstrate that the proposals would harm the special qualities of the candidate extension to the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or its scenic attributes.*

5.2 The main conclusions that can be drawn from the 2020 appeal decision are:

- ❖ Over time, there have been numerous changes to this RPG.
- ❖ Most of the buildings that have been constructed in the north eastern part of the RPG since the latter part of the 20th century would have had some adverse effects upon its open parkland character
- ❖ Both appeal sites (A&B) contribute to the significance (historic interest) of the RPG.
- ❖ The proposed American Barn would be a **sizeable** building. It would cause conflict with the open parkland character, although would amount to less than substantial harm to the significance of the RPG – somewhere towards the lower end of the sliding scale of harm.
- ❖ **The removal of an existing building would help restore the open character of the RPG, and, in so doing, would be of public benefit.**
- ❖ **The construction of a new building/provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport within the GB is one of the specified exceptions to inappropriate development within the GB, as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the GB and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. This could include American barn / stables.**
- ❖ The 2016 polo permission does not appear to restrict the number of horses that could be stabled or kept on the land.

6.0 Proposal

6.1 The stables are already in situ. They were installed in 2021 / 2022.

6.2 They comprise a row of stables (one triple unit and three double units) and a single unit. A total of 10 booths.

6.3 The row of stables (labelled as 'Block C', see Fig. 8 below) are situated up against / back to back with the existing row of lawful stables (labelled as 'Block B' on Fig. 7) subject of LDC application ref: 242597 situated to the east of the American Barn.

6.4 The single unit is situated at the southern end of the lawful row of stables (Block A) also the subject of LDC ref: 242597, to the west of the American Barn.

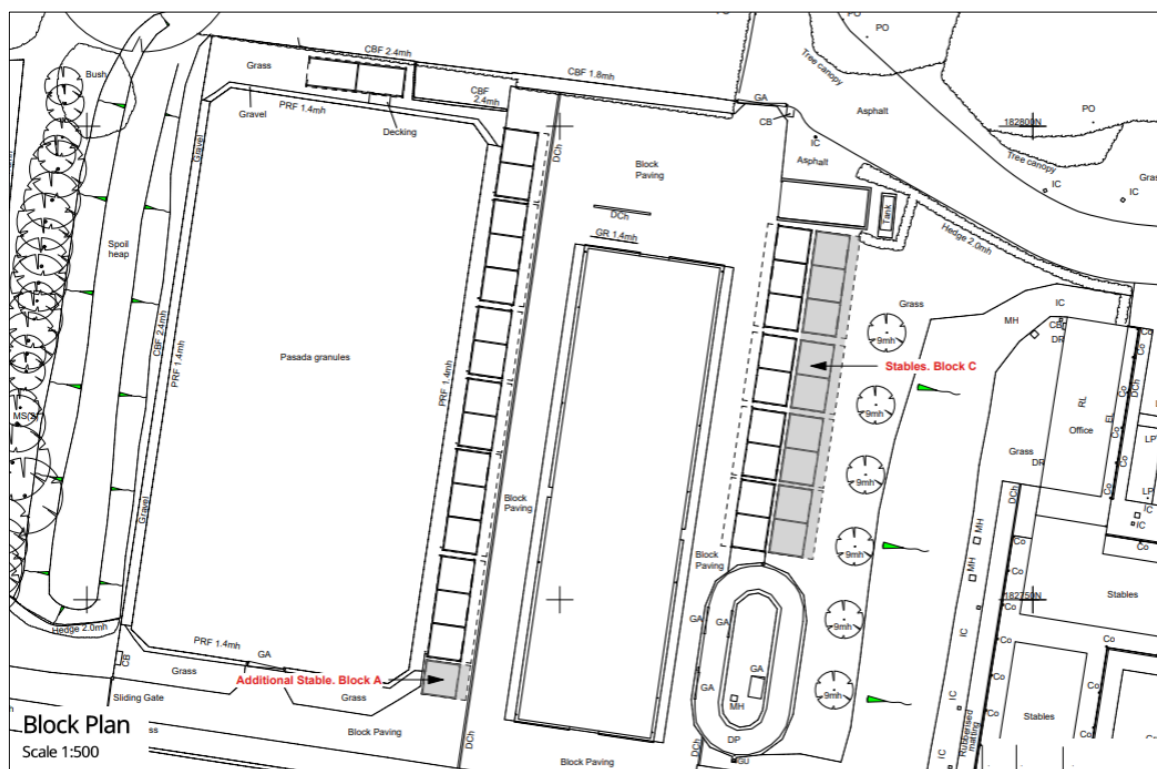


Fig. 8 – Proposed Block Plan (showing location of stables in relation to the existing buildings)

6.5 The stable units themselves are designed to be mobile, with metal skids. However, they have the same appearance and form as a permanent building and the intention is for them to remain in their current position, as they have done since their installation in 2021 / 2022.

6.6 The LDC approval granted under 242597 confirmed that as result of their size and degree of permanence, in planning terms, the rows of stable buildings (Block A and Block B) installed on the site are *de facto* permanent buildings.

- 6.7 The units are constructed from timber, with horizontal timber cladding and a black coloured corrugated roof.
- 6.8 They are typical of loose boxes; not uncommon or out of keeping in rural locations or at equestrian premises.



Fig. 9 – Elevations of row of stables (Block C)

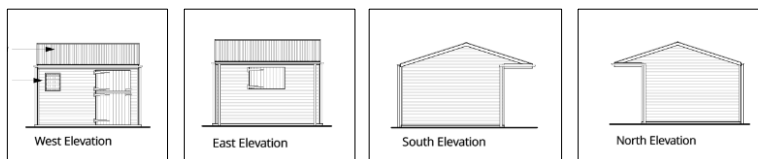


Fig. 10 – Elevations of single stable unit



Fig. 11 – The row of looseboxes (Block C)



Fig. 12 – The single loosebox unit (situated on the end of existing row of stable Block A)

- 6.9 The stables are used in conjunction with the approved polo facility. They house polo horses during the polo season, which runs between May – August. In late Autumn / Winter, the polo horses are put out to pasture at a farm in West Sussex. From late Autumn and over Winter, until early Spring the stables are closed up.
- 6.10 The manure generated in the stalls is collected daily and stored in a concrete muck enclosure (situated at the northern of the adjacent row of stables) and then taken away by a local farmer.

Proposed trade-off (with lawful portacabins)

- 6.11 As part of the proposal, it is proposed to trade off a series of interconnected portacabins and a shed that were confirmed as being lawful buildings under 250370.
- 6.12 A plan identifying the portacabins and confirming their size / volumes in relation to the retained stables has been provided as part of the application. The portacabins are located within the same planning unit / area of ownership as the application.
- 6.13 The gross external volume of the portacabins and shed is very similar to the retained stables.
- 6.14 The portacabins were originally brought onto the land for use as site offices, initially during the construction of the new dwellings permitted under 101748, but were retained and used in a similar way whilst the polo facility was under construction. Since then, they have been used for ancillary storage by grounds maintenance staff. They have not been maintained and are suffering from neglect. As a consequence, they have become unsightly and the area around them has become overgrown.
- 6.15 The intention is to remove these lawful buildings as part of the proposal and the land on which they are located tidied up and restored to grass. This would result in a significant improvement to the appearance of the RPG within this part of the estate.
- 6.16 The inspector in the 2020 appeal determined that:

'The removal of an existing building would help restore the open character of the RPG, and, in so doing, would be of public benefit.'

7.0 Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

7.1 The following table summarises the key elements of the Framework relevant to this planning application:

Section 1 – Achieving Sustainable Development	
The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development	Para 7
Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives). These are economic, social and environmental objectives	Para 8
Section 4 – Decision making	
Planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.	Para 39
Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places	
The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work	Para 126
Planning decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.	Para 130
Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land	
When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.	Para 153
Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies: b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport , outdoor recreation,	Para 154

cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;	
Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment	
The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including trees and woodland; d) minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible.	Para 174
Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment	
In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.	Para 207
Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.	Para 208
In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;	Para 210
When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.	Para 212
Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of: a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional; b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II*	Para 213

registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.	
Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.	Para 215

Development Plan

7.2 The development plan comprises:

- **Core Strategy (CS)** – Adopted Jan 2010
- **Managing Development Delivery (MDD)** – Adopted Feb 2014

7.3 Work is underway on a new local plan – the Local Plan Update – which will put in place a new planning strategy for the period to 2040. Once adopted, it will replace the current Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans. The Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040: Proposed Submission Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Planning Inspector on Friday 28 February 2025. However, no date has been set for examination (at the time of writing, the Council were responding to the inspectors Initial Questions and on 12 May had asked for more time to respond). As such, only little weight can be given to the emerging plan at this stage. The adopted Development plan therefore continues to carry full weight.

7.4 The most relevant development plan policies are

Policy TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets

“The Borough Council will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings by:

- Requiring works to or affecting heritage assets or their setting to demonstrate that the proposals would at least conserve and, where possible enhance the important character and special architectural or historic interest of the building, Conservation Area, monument or park and garden including its setting and views.
- Supporting development proposals or other initiatives that will conserve and, where possible, enhance the local character, setting, management and historic significance of designated heritage assets, with particular support for initiatives that would improve any assets that are recognised as being in poor condition or at risk.”

It also states that proposals within or affecting the setting of Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Monuments or Conservation Areas shall pay special attention to retaining original or historic garden or landscape features.

- 7.5 As noted by the inspector in the 2020 appeal decision, Policy TB24 does not include the 'public benefits' balance contained within section 16 of the Framework. This therefore reduces the weight to be given to any conflict with the policy.

Policy CP11 – Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)

"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 except where:

- 1) It 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; and
- 2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and
- 3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion; or
- 4) In the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or in the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;
- 5) In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:
 - i) Bring about environmental improvements; or
 - ii) Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.
- 6) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;
- 7) Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9."

- 7.6 The subtext to CP11 states that:

"The Council recognises the role of leisure and recreational activities (that do not require significant buildings) to maintain the character of the countryside".

Policy CP12 – Green Belt. "Planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development within the Metropolitan Green Belt as defined in PPG2."

Policy TB01 – Development within the Green Belt. "Within the Green Belt, development for the purposes set out in paragraphs 89 and 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework ...

will only be permitted where they maintain the openness of, and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in, the Green Belt.”

- 7.7 As noted by the inspector in the 2020 appeal decision, CS policy CP12 and MDD policy TB01, which relate to the GB, were based on the now cancelled PPG2 and an earlier version of the Framework. In the context of these appeals, this reduces (to a limited extent) the weight to be given to any conflict with these policies.

Policy CP3 – General Principles for development. Provides general guidance for all developments, with the primary remit that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

Ecology / Biodiversity Net Gain

- 7.8 As the structures are already existing, and have been in situ since 2021 / 2022, there is no ecology impact considerations.
- 7.9 As the application is retrospective, it is also exempt from BNG.

8.0 Planning Assessment

- 8.1 The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through into the local Development Plan.
- 8.2 Although, some of the policies in the Development are out of date with the latest version of the NPPF and therefore attract less weight.

Principle of development

- 8.3 The site is located within the countryside outside any defined settlement boundary.
- 8.4 The application site forms part of an established polo facility, which is home to a successful high goal polo team. The stables are required to house polo horses, as part of the operation of the polo facility.
- 8.5 Under Part 1 of Policy CP11, development is permitted if it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside, in connection with countryside based enterprises and activities. The operation of an established polo facility is clearly an activity that is based in the countryside. The provision of stables in connection with this equestrian activity is therefore acceptable development in the countryside under CP11.
- 8.6 The site lies within the Green Belt, although outdoor sport is one of the specified exceptions to inappropriate development within the GB, as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the GB and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. By virtue of their size and their low profile construction, as well as their siting within an existing group of equestrian buildings (including a large American Barn and a large polo stable building) the stables do not have a harmful effect on openness and therefore are appropriate development with the Green Belt.
- 8.7 The proposal is therefore acceptable in principle.

Compliance with Core Strategy Policy CP3 (General Principles for development)

- 8.8 Policy CP3 provides general guidance for all developments, with the primary remit that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.
- 8.9 Adherence with this policy touches on a number of different aspects, including design and landscape impact, which are detailed below.

- 8.10 Due to the location of the stables and the distance of the nearest neighbouring properties – approx. 70m away and on the opposite side of the A4130, they would not have any detriment on the amenities of adjoining land uses or occupiers.

Design

- 8.11 The stable units are modest size structures with a low profile roof (ridge height is 3m). They are typical of the type of loose boxes found on most equestrian premises and are a common sight within the countryside.
- 8.12 In terms of their materials, detailing and form, they are acceptable structures that are sympathetic and in-keeping with their surroundings and adjacent / existing buildings.
- 8.13 In design terms, the proposal is therefore acceptable (in accordance with CP3).

Landscape impact

- 8.14 The stables form part of a group / cluster of equestrian buildings located along the northern boundary of the estate / RPG. They are situated up against an existing row of stables and mirror their appearance and layout. They are therefore well related to the existing buildings on this part of the site.
- 8.15 Within the estate / RPG, the stables are screened from wider views by the existing equestrian buildings and from closer inspection they are viewed within the context of the existing equestrian buildings. They therefore have a very minimal visual impact. Outside of the site / along the A4130, the northern boundary of the estate is screened by existing vegetation, which limits views into the site. The Corten steel gates at the equestrian entrance along the A4130 largely block views of the equestrian buildings inside the site. Due to the stables low profile roofs, they have very limited impact. At best, only the very top of the roofs can be seen.
- 8.16 The proposal therefore complies with Policy CP3.

Heritage impact – RPG

- 8.17 The impact of the proposal on the Grade II* RPG is a significant consideration.
- 8.18 National policy requires that great weight is attributed in planning decisions to impacts on designated heritage assets. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. The park is registered at Grade II* and is therefore a highly graded asset.
- 8.19 As evidenced in the listing description and what is observed on site, the most sensitive parts of the designated parkland are the areas of garden and pleasure grounds in and around Park

Place and the area known as Happy Valley, which includes the listed Grotto and Druids Temple.

- 8.20 The proposed stables are located in the very northern part of the RPG, that forms part of the Park Place Stables complex and the interrelating polo facility. This part of the RPG forms part of the 'extensive park' area mentioned in the listing description that surrounds the inner core of the gardens and pleasure grounds. It refers to areas of open parkland, many containing clumps and specimen trees, enclosed by belts of trees and woodland, although identifies the latter as being particularly found to the west of the site. It references the north-east section being incorporated in the C19 and having been overlaid by a golf course (in the late C20), with the remainder being a mixture of arable and pasture.
- 8.21 In the 2020 appeal decision, the inspector observed that there have been numerous changes to the north-eastern part of the RPG over time, including the erection of buildings and the construction of two golf courses (the golf course in the north eastern part of the park has since been replaced by polo/equine facilities.) Some of these changes, such as the removal of golf course bunkers and other inappropriate works, have assisted in restoring parts of the parkland. However, in all likelihood, most of the buildings that have been constructed in the north eastern part of the RPG since the latter part of the 20th century would have had some adverse effects upon its open parkland character.
- 8.22 Whilst the stables, equine facilities and the boundary fencing [on appeal site B] could be considered to convey a sense of partition from the parkland, the inspector opined that the spaces around the buildings (including the areas where the 24 loose boxes have been erected) assist in retaining a 'semblance' of the open attributes of this part of the RPG. He therefore concluded that appeal site B contributed to the significance (historic interest) of the RPG. Although since the appeal decision in 2020, the 24 loose boxes referred to by the inspector in this passage of his decision notice have been confirmed as being lawful buildings (under 242597) and are therefore permanent features on the site.
- 8.23 The existing character of this part of the RPG is equestrian in nature, characterised by buildings and facilities associated with that use. The proposals are entirely consistent with that character.
- 8.24 In view of the above, and their modest size / low profile construction, location within the existing group of lawful / permitted equestrian buildings and their minimal landscape impact, the impact of the stables subject of this application upon the significance of the RPG as a whole is considered to be negligible. Any harm arising would be less than substantial at the lowest end of the scale. There would, to a limited degree, therefore be some conflict with Policy TB24.

Public benefits

- 8.25 As noted by the inspector in the 2020 appeal, some public benefit arises from members of the public being interested in playing/watching/following polo, including attending polo matches elsewhere. Additional serious competition within this sport, through the involvement of more/competitive teams, could also enhance public enjoyment. He noted that there has been very considerable investment in developing polo facilities at Park Place and that the polo team based at Park Place was achieving much sporting success. He therefore concluded that the proposed polo facilities could deliver some public benefit and afforded this some limited weight.
- 8.26 The inspector also opined that the removal of an existing storage building (as part of appeal A) would help restore the open character of that part of the parkland and, in so doing, would be of public benefit – although in the case of the appeal A proposal he judged the replacement building would harm the significance of the RPG, and as such, on balance, would not amount to a public benefit.
- 8.27 In this case, it is proposed to remove a series of linked portacabins and a shed from the RPG which have been confirmed as being lawful buildings under application ref 242597. These existing structures are of utilitarian character, inappropriate to their context and have become neglected and the area around them overgrown. Their removal would therefore provide a positive enhancement to the appearance of the RPG, which would provide a clear public benefit. As shown, the gross external volume of the portacabins and shed is virtually the same as the retain stables. So would be a comparative trade-off in terms of the size of buildings within the RPG. As such, the removal of the portacabins (and shed) would be a significant public benefit.

Heritage balance on the impact to the RPG

- 8.28 Given the negligible impact of the stables and the less than substantial harm (at the lowest end of the scale) they would have on the significance of the RPG, when weighed against the public benefits that would arise, in the form of the public interest in watching polo, the contribution to additional serious competition within this sport and the considerable investment in developing polo facilities at Park Place, which can be afforded some limited weight; as well as the proposed removal of the existing lawful linked portacabin buildings and shed, which would result in significant public benefit, the balance tips heavily in favour of granting planning permission.

Impact on setting of listed buildings

- 8.29 It has been determined that the proposal would not harm the setting of any of the listed buildings within the RPG.

- 8.30 The only listed building that can see the stables is Craigmere House (now The White House) which is situated opposite the equestrian entrance into the estate. Although only the roofs of the stables are visible. Due to them being modest in size and having a low profile roof, views from the listed building into and across the RPG would not be materially affected.
- 8.31 The settings of the listed buildings would not therefore be adversely affected by the proposal.

Green Belt

- 8.32 The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it, are one of the specified exemptions from inappropriate development within the Green Belt, i.e. is appropriate development.
- 8.33 The proposed stables are situated on land which was included as part of the planning permission for the creation of a polo facility (under application ref: 162288) and are required to house polo horses, as part of the established polo facility at Park Place. They are, therefore, by definition, appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, i.e. polo, which takes place in the open, on open land within the countryside.
- 8.34 By virtue of their size and their low profile construction, as well as their siting within an existing group of equestrian buildings (which includes a large American Barn and a large polo stable building) the stables do not have a harmful effect on openness and therefore constitute appropriate development within the Green Belt.
- 8.35 In addition, a series of linked portacabins and a shed are proposed to be removed as part of the application. The gross external volume of these buildings is very similar (in fact almost identical) to the proposed stables. The removal of the portacabins and shed would therefore result in a zero net increase in buildings within the extended site / within the Green Belt, and would be further reason why the openness of the Green Belt would be preserved.
- 8.36 The proposal therefore complies with Policy CP12 and TB01, as well the guidance in the NPPF.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 The retained stables are modest size buildings with low profile roofs.
- 9.2 They form part of an established polo facility, which supports a successful high goal polo team,
- 9.3 They are used to house polo horses during the polo season (between May and August).
- 9.4 They form part of an existing group of equestrian buildings situated along the northern boundary of the estate / the RPG.
- 9.5 Historically, the north eastern part of the estate / RPG has had a number of uses, including a turkey / chicken farm and a golf course.
- 9.6 The main significance of the RPG is the area around the principal dwelling (Park Place) and its garden and pleasure grounds (i.e. the area around Happy Valley).
- 9.7 In heritage terms, the stables would have a negligible impact and result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the RPG. When weighed against the public benefits, in particular, the proposal removal of the lawful portacabin buildings and the significant benefit this would provide in improving the appearance of the RPG, this weighs heavily in favour of planning permission being granted.
- 9.8 The setting of the nearest listed buildings, e.g. Craigmere House (situated outside the site boundary) would not be adversely affected by the retained structures; nor would the settings of any other listed buildings or structures within the RPG be affected.
- 9.9 The buildings are for the purpose of open sport and are not therefore inappropriate buildings within the Green Belt. In view of their modest size and their siting (amongst other existing equestrian buildings), they would also not harm the openness of the Green Belt.
- 9.10 The gross external volume of the portacabins is very similar to the retained stables. There would, therefore, be no net increase in buildings, either within the Green Belt or the RPG.
- 9.11 The proposal is an acceptable form of development within the countryside and in landscape terms would not be inappropriate or cause visual harm.
- 9.12 No other properties or land uses would be affected by the proposal.
- 9.13 The development therefore accords with the Development Plan, as well as the most up to date guidance in the Framework, and in terms of the heritage balance weighs heavily in favour of planning permission being granted.