

ET Planning

Planning Statement

Client:

Kate White

The Club House

Farley Hill Equestrian Centre, Church Road, Swallowfield
RG7 1TJ

Change of use of a former equestrian clubhouse (sui generis) to a fitness / massage business falling under Class E (retrospective)

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CIL | Enforcement | Land Promotion | Planning | Sequential Tests | Viability

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for a material change of use of a former equestrian clubhouse (sui generis) to a fitness / massage business falling under Class E (retrospective) at The Club House, Farley Hill Equestrian Centre, Church Road, Swallowfield, RG7 1TJ.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents prepared by Accord Architecture and Stunt Consulting:
- 1612-PL10000 – Site Location Plan
 - 1612-PL11000 – Site Block Plan
 - 1612-PL.1101 – Site Plan
 - 1612-PL.1200 – Existing Ground Floor Plan
 - 1612-PL.1201 – Existing Roof Plan
 - 1612-PL.1210 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan
 - 1612-PL.1211 – Proposed Roof Plan
 - 1612-PL.1300 – Existing Elevations – Sht. 1
 - 1612-PL.1301 – Existing Elevations – Sht. 2

- 1612-PL.1310 – Proposed Elevations – Sht. 1
- 1612-PL.1310 – Proposed Elevations – Sht. 2
- B2236 – TN01 – Transport Technical Note

1.4 The relevant application fee will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

2.1 The subject building is a former club house which lies within the established Farley Hill Equestrian Centre, accessed from Church Road on the edge of Swallowfield.

3. Planning History

3.1 071523 - Proposed change of use from agricultural and Class B8 (storage and distribution) to livery yard to include erection of stabling and change of use of agricultural land to mixed agricultural/equestrian use. (Approved)

4. Development Proposals

4.1 The proposal comprises an application for a material change of use of the existing club house, to a small-scale health and well-being facility including:

- TRX studio
- Yoga studio

- Room for sports massage/therapies (appointment-only)

5. Policy Assessment

- 5.1 **National Guidance:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a relevant material consideration to the application.
- 5.2 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that “Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way” and “at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”. Paragraph 124 of the NPPF comments that planning should “promote an effective use of land” in “meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions”.
- 5.3 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.4 The NPPF explicitly supports the re-use of existing buildings and diversification of established rural enterprises. **Policy CP11** Proposals Outside Development Limits (Countryside) also supports appropriate rural enterprise/diversification and recreation where character and environmental quality are protected. It is duly considered that due to the nature and scale of the proposals (no external alterations, optimisation of an existing building & health/wellbeing use) this aligns with the principles of **Policy CP11**.

- 5.5 Specifically, at paragraph 96 c), the NPPF promotes **healthy and inclusive communities** with suitable access to sport/physical activity. This forms a legislative safeguard for the loss of facilities that provide a valuable contribution to this. Furthermore, this diversifies the existing, established recreational use on site (Equestrian Centre) and enriches the site's profile as a health and wellbeing provider serving the local community.
- 5.6 This is echoed in Local **Policy CP2** (Inclusive Communities) which encourages provision and retention of facilities that meet local community needs, including health and wellbeing uses. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal fulfils the aspirations of NPPF and **Policy CP2**.
- 5.7 With regards to the scale and operation of the use, the proposal is a small-scale, health and wellbeing use (TRX, yoga and appointment-only therapies). This is accommodated within an existing building.
- 5.8 Notably, the timetable is distributed proportionately throughout the week, to ensure that activity is staggered; with no overlapping classes. There are no classes on a Thursday. Cumulatively, this scheduling programme maintains a predictable pattern of use that can be adequately controlled. The timetable is outlined as follows:
- **Monday** – TRX Fitness: 08:00, 09:15, 18:00, 19:15 (each class 15 participants).
 - **Tuesday** – Sound bath (let): 10:15, every 3rd Tuesday only, 1 hour, 5 participants.
 - **Wednesday** – TRX Pilates: 18:15 (15 participants); TRX Yoga: 19:15 (10 participants).
 - **Thursday**: No classes.

- **Friday** – TRX Pilates: 12:15 (10 max); TRX Fitness: 13:15 (10 max).
- **Weekends:** Occasional ad-hoc yoga sessions (max 10).

- 5.9 The proposal re-uses an existing building within a working rural estate and contributes to a diverse, sustainable rural enterprise and recreation/health offer, aligning with CP11 and the presumption in favour (CC01
- 5.10 **Sustainable Development:** The site is considered to be in a sustainable location, paragraph 110 of the NPPF reiterates that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport will vary between urban and rural areas and decision-making should account for this.
- 5.11 Furthermore, the site comprises an existing, established equestrian centre that already generates a base level of vehicular movements.
- 5.12 In this case, the operation is proportionate and managed for its context, whereby classes do not overlap, attendance is capped and an established car-share programme (**circa 20–30%**) further suppresses peak parking demand and vehicle movements. Occasional cycling is already observed on Fridays as explored above. Therefore, measures have been included within the proposal to further support the sustainability of the site and manage travel in a manner that is appropriate for the rural location.
- 5.13 **Loss of Employment:** The proposed fitness/wellbeing use falls within Class E (Commercial, Business and Service)(indoor sport/fitness; health services), which is employment-generating in its own right and does not result in 'loss of employment' that would detract from the wider equestrian use on-site.
- 5.14 This use of the club house instead acts as a natural addition to the wider site that complements the existing equestrian operation. As

such, the floorspace remains in **active commercial use**, with paid instructors/therapists and ancillary admin/cleaning—so there is **no loss of employment floorspace** and no conflict with policies that protect industrial/office land.

- 5.15 **Character and Appearance of the Area: Policy CP3** (General Principles of Development), sets out where proposals should respond positively to local character.

- 5.16 **Policy CC02** – Development Limits (Character at the Edge/Countryside Transition) states that beyond settlement parameters, development must respect the transition to the countryside, maintaining the pattern of buildings, spacing and landscape structure, and avoiding urbanising effects (e.g., excessive lighting, hardstanding).

- 5.17 The subject building is a former club house which lies within the established Farley Hill Equestrian Centre, accessed from Church Road on the edge of Swallowfield.

- 5.18 The immediate setting on the wider site is a working rural estate comprising equestrian buildings, arenas/menage, internal tracks and areas of hardstanding contained by hedgerows and mature trees. The built form is low in stature and ancillary, with functional, rural aesthetic typical of an equestrian complex. The Club House sits within this cluster, read within the context of the wider estate rather than an isolated element.

- 5.19 The surrounding area comprises a mixture of farms, estate buildings and sporadic dwellings set in spacious plots and bounded by fields and woodland.

- 5.20 To reiterate, there are no external alterations proposed, and this application relates strictly to the re-purposing of the existing club

house building (retrospective). The use serves as an organic continuation of the recreational/sport character of the site, through providing small-scale health and wellbeing classes and therapies that are aligned with the existing equestrian activity.

- 5.21 In terms of landscape character, the wider estate at Farley Hill is effectively screened by existing hedgerows and mature trees. As outlined, there is no encroachment into open fields through additional built form. Further to this external lighting remains as existing and no additional floodlighting is incorporated. In turn, the proposal does not alter the landscape character.
- 5.22 Overall, the proposals comply with the principles of **Policies CP3** and **CC02**.
- 5.23 **Residential Amenity:** The Farley Hill Equestrian Centre is an established facility that sits within a spacious plot. As such, it is entirely self-contained, and the change of use has no bearing on the amenity of neighbouring properties.
- 5.24 The nearest dwellings are separated by distance, planting and the interwoven land comprising the wider estate. The pattern of use remains daytime/evening and appointment-based, with short, contained peaks and no late-night activity.
- 5.25 Comparatively, with equestrian events already taking place on site, the overall intensity is **modest**, internalised and predictable. There is no external plant proposed, and any background music is low-level, consigned to indoor use and controlled by management.
- 5.26 Overall, the site is not considered to have any adverse impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties or other users of the existing equestrian use.

- 5.27 **Trees and Landscaping:** Due to the scale and nature of the proposal, which relates to the re-use of an existing building, with strictly internal layout changes; there are no trees that are impacted by the proposal. The on-site landscaping remains unchanged from the existing arrangements.
- 5.28 **Transport and Parking:** Paragraph 116 of the NPPF Paragraph 116 of the NPPF clearly states that development should only be refused on highways grounds, in the case that there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 5.29 **Policy CP6 – Managing Travel Demand:** Seeks appropriate parking and sustainable travel measures proportionate to a site’s location and use.
- 5.30 **Policy CC07 – Parking:** Requires compliance with borough parking standards (incl. EV provision) and layouts that avoid on-street pressure.
- 5.31 With regards to patterns and car-sharing, customers predominantly travel by car, given the rural location, with an occasional cyclist commuting on a Friday.
- 5.32 Crucially however, a significant minority car-share is in place (circa 20-30%), which covers those travelling from Burghfield and Mortimer particularly. In conjunction with the staggered timetable and scheduling set out in the ‘Principle of Development’ section, this materially reduces ‘peak’ parking demand.
- 5.33 Parking is derived from the existing on-site provision within the established equestrian complex (as illustrated on the submitted plans) with clear pedestrian routes to the club house entrance.

- 5.34 No new site access is created, and the proposal relies on the existing Church Road entrance and internal circulation. With reference to the Transport Technical Note, which clearly sets out the peak capacity of 11–13 spaces for the largest classes, the operation can be comfortably contained within the on-site parking that already serves the complex. Additionally, this operational level provides natural flexibility across the shared estate when required.
- 5.35 The Transport Note corroborates that the Club House is a small-scale, timetable-based fitness/wellbeing use within the established Farley Hill equestrian estate, accessed from Church Road with no new or altered access required. Given the rural context, most trips are by car, but operator evidence shows around 30% car-sharing (with occasional cycling), and classes do not overlap.
- 5.36 On that basis, a typical 15-person class generates about 11 car arrivals, which is a low, short-duration peak readily absorbed by the local network and the existing estate access. 7no. on-plot bays are identified for the Club House, with clearly available overflow capacity within the wider equestrian car park to avoid any on-street overspill; all manoeuvring occurs within the estate. A five-year collision review records no injury accidents at the access, indicating no inherent safety issue.
- 5.37 Overall, vehicular movements are modest and spread across the day and week (notably no Thursday activity and sporadic weekend use). The internal speeds are low and due to the established use, the site is accustomed to managing **far higher peaks** during equestrian events.
- 5.38 Due to the scale and nature of the use, this does not introduce HGV activity and deliveries are light (small parcels/consumables). As concluded within the Transport Technical Note, with the existing

operation in place, there is no unacceptable impact on highway safety and the residual cumulative impact is not severe. Therefore, the proposal fully complies with national and local policy.

- 5.39 **Refuse Provision:** Waste arrangements remain as existing, in line with the wider site.
- 5.40 **Drainage and SuDS:** The drainage arrangements remain as existing.
- 5.41 **Ecology:** Due to the scale and nature of the proposal (retrospective, re-purposing of existing building) there would be no harmful implications on the biodiversity network, nor would Biodiversity Net Gain be applicable.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an efficient use of land.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would be without adverse effect on the character of the area or the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- 6.3 Overall, the proposal generates additional employment, in a sector (health/wellbeing) that is explicitly advocated for in the NPPF. It maintains the existing floorspace in commercial use, introduces direct paid roles, and supports the rural enterprise in line with national policy. As such, there is no conflict with the NPPF—the scheme positively advances its aims for rural diversification,

enhances the existing equestrian use on-site and provides effective use of existing buildings.

- 6.4 Additionally, as supported by the Transport Technical Note, the use does not generate a harmful level of vehicular movements and integrates effectively with the existing equestrian use, with adequate designated provision and overflow parking available on-site.
- 6.5 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

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