

Planning Application 250785 Comments

This is a response to Retrospective Planning Application 250785 to change the use of land at Newlands, Mole Road, Sindlesham to equestrian, and create a riding arena with associated engineering works. These comments are being submitted as an email attachment because the comments facility in the WBC Planning Portal appears not to accommodate graphics.

The application covers the erection of a riding arena for the sole use of the applicant's own horses. The riding of those horses in the arena by others is not excluded so the lack of change to traffic movements is questionable. However, the outline given for the application site is limited to the arena area and the existing track that links it to Mole Road, which may explain the assertion.

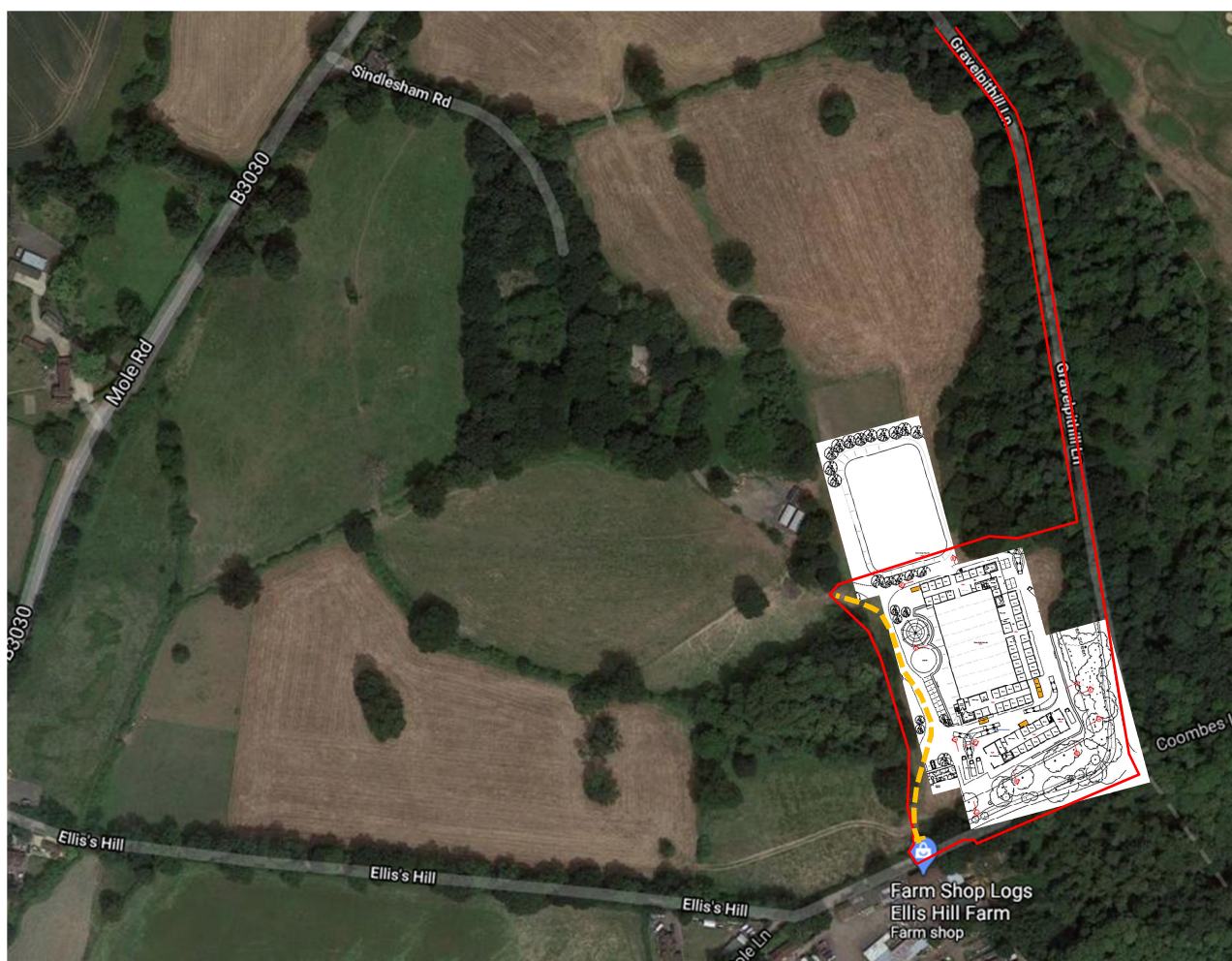
Some changes that have been made in recent months, beyond the application's site outline, suggest that preparations are being made for significant additional traffic, either connected with the use of the arena or with some other facility yet to be declared.

A double width gate has been installed on the Newlands boundary with byway AN9, opposite Ellis Hill Farm, with a new track leading northwards towards the arena. The wide gate and surface of the track appear suitable for HGV horseboxes, for example, to turn in and out of Newlands from the Public Byway, accessed via Gravelpithill Lane (AN6) from Mole Road. This is shown below in yellow.



The positions of the gate and track coincide with part of the plans rejected in 2020 under application number 201458. This is shown below with the submitted plan positioned over, and aligned with, the aerial view

current at the time. The declared development boundary is outlined in red, curiously excluding the outdoor school. The approximate line of the new track is overlaid as a dashed yellow line.



Construction of the gateway exposed a derelict farm gate that had been buried in the hedgerow. Its use is thought to predate 1952, when Newlands was separated from a single farm centred around what is now known as Ellis Hill Farm. That old gate, now removed, does not justify the introduction of a major access point for Newlands via a more circuitous route from the public highway.

Section 5.10 of the Planning Statement states that as a retrospective development, all existing trees and vegetation would be retained. Whilst there is no further vegetation removal being sought, it is clear that vegetation has been removed and/or covered by the material added for the arena, raising the ground above its natural level.

A similar approach may have been taken in Section 5.22, in that as a retrospective application, no further tree felling is being sought. It is therefore not clear whether any were felled in carrying out the work prematurely. In the event that the current application is refused, measures would be needed to restore the landscape and ecology.

Tree Preservation Orders 1684/2019 and 1825/2021 apply to Newlands, with TPO 1825/2021 spanning the application development site.

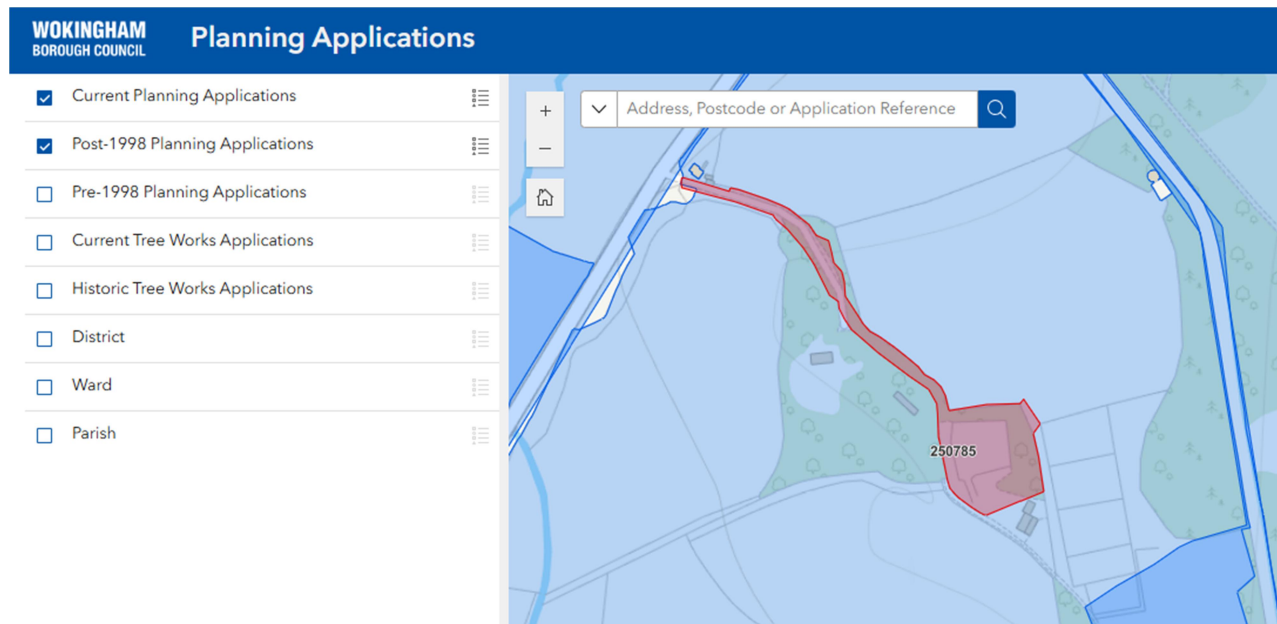
An indication of work done on the arena can be gleaned from the aerial views used for the current and previous applications above. Below are three images of the same area around the proposed arena, two

being aerial views taken from each of the compilations above, and the third showing the edge of TPO1825/2021, taken from the WBC interactive map of TPOs.



The left hand aerial view shows the arena area before the applied for work had started, while the second shows the same area after it had started, though not necessarily completed.

It is noticeable that the building to the north west of the arena is also an addition since application 201458 was being considered. Unlike Applications 201458 and 250758, according to the WBC interactive map showing Current and Post-1998 planning applications, the recent building has not been processed through the planning system.



Whilst the building is shown on the WBC interactive map of TPOs, the building does not appear on the TPO 1825/2021 document itself, suggesting that the building has been constructed since 2021.

Section 2.2 of the Planning Statement refers to two blocks horse stables, one of which is described as being north west of the riding arena. It is claimed that these have become lawful through the passage of time. This cannot apply to the building now in question.

In view of the above, retrospective Planning Application 250785 should not be taken as a complete declaration of actions that have already taken place in relation to a possible expansion of equestrian facilities at Newlands.

The whole of Newlands is situated within the Barkham and Bearwood Valued Landscape Area, adjacent to the Coombes, designated as Ancient Woodland and a Local Wildlife Site. It would be inappropriate to allow development of facilities that detract from the natural landscape or attract heavier traffic into this area.

The Planning Authority may deem it acceptable to have a well screened arena for the sole use with the site's own horses, approached only along the existing track joining it directly to Mole Road. A more intrusive facility should not be allowed to develop, incrementally or otherwise from that arena, or indeed separately from it.

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