



**RELOCATION AND EXPANSION  
OF THE TWO COUNTIES  
EQUESTRIAN CENTRE**

**DESIGN, ACCESS & PLANNING  
STATEMENT**

**Berry Farm  
Whepley Hill  
Chesham  
HP5 3RW**

**March 2022**

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## **APPENDIX 1 LIST OF ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report has been prepared at the request of Mr Webb to outline the facts considered relevant to the expansion and relocation of equestrian facilities at Berry Farm.
- 1.2 Berry Farm is located along Whepley Hill, Bovingdon (See Location Plan ref: LDBF0033). The Berry Farm site extends to approximately 52 Ha and comprises a number of buildings that are currently used for farming, commercial and other related activities. There are currently 19 stables in existence.

## **2 THE PROPOSAL**

### **2.1 Background**

2.1.1 The Equestrian Centre has been in operation since 2009 and has been run successfully. The existing stables are very dilapidated and require significant investment to bring them up to a reasonable standard. It would be impossible to re-roof and refurbish the existing structures without closing the business down; this would have a terminal impact.

2.1.2 The relocation allows the existing business to run whilst the new facilities are established and will allow the business to relocate seamlessly. There is demand for additional stabling, but the existing location has no room to expand whilst the new location allows a small expansion. The new location is well screened with mature vegetation, hedging and trees on two sides. It also allows facilities to be co-located with the indoor arena and menage reducing travel times and improving efficiency.

### **2.2 Revised Position of the Stables Building**

2.2.1 The relocation of the existing business and expansion of facilities to meet demand and increase the sustainability and profitability of the business post COVID.

2.2.2 The proposed building can be seen on the plans and elevations that have been submitted with this application – See Appendix 1. for a full list of documents accompanying this application.

2.2.3 Being close to the existing field entrance there will be little in the way of access works and it will also make the best use of the existing substantial trees on the boundaries of the site.

This position is also much further away from any public views. The proposed new location will equally meet the detailed requirements in Policy 81, as follows:

- Both the original and the new locations are compliant, regarding equestrian rights of way, to an equal degree under Policy 81(a)
- The proposed position, adjacent to the line of mature trees and hedgerow on the boundary, meets the criteria for such a small-scale facility to be permitted under Policy 81(b) In fact it is as close as possible to the trees without impinging on their root protection areas.
- The design of the stables building under this proposal is consistent with that expected of stabling.

### 2.3 Design of the Stables Building

The design criteria for the stables building are the same as would be expected of stables in the countryside, i.e. in a simple style and as compact as possible, in keeping with its surroundings using traditional materials and finishes. As previously, it will be sited as close as possible to existing trees and will be built on a concrete slab foundation to avoid any potential root damage.

### 2.4 Highways

The site utilises an existing access, there is minimal traffic associated with the site.

## 3 RELEVANT HISTORY

There is no relevant planning history.

## 4 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

- 4.1 The application site is located within the Green Belt where most development is considered inappropriate, and there is a general presumption against such development. Chapter 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) emphasises the importance of Green Belts and states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 4.2 When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. This position is supported by Policy GB2 of The Chiltern District Local Plan.
- 4.3 Nonetheless, Paragraphs 145 and 146 of the NPPF outline some exceptions to this, including the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for 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.

4.4 Material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation) are also permitted provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

The question of 'appropriateness' depends on whether the equestrian use for this site constitutes 'outdoor recreation'.

4.5 The NPPF fails to provide a strict definition of what constitutes outdoor recreation, however, in a previous appeal decision (APP/X0415/X/17/3184571 dated 21 August 2018) the Inspector specifies that the keeping, schooling, riding, jumping etc. of horses for private leisure would constitute a 'recreational' purpose.

4.6 Furthermore, given the stable buildings and associated land would solely be used to ride, feed and house the horses, it is considered that describing use as 'outdoor sport or recreation' is appropriate.

4.7 Given that the proposed development seeks the change of use of the land to equestrian, it is considered that this would not amount to inappropriate development as it proposes a change of use for outdoor sport and in of itself, would not result in a harmful impact on openness of the Green Belt.

4.8 Similarly, given that the proposed building would be used for equestrian purposes, it is considered that the construction of a stable building would not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, provided it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. This is in accordance with Paragraph 145 of the NPPF. As the new building replaces the existing there is no impact on the Green Belt.

## **5 PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENT**

### **5.1 Overview**

An area of hardstanding is required to create a level surface for the stables, an appropriate handling area for the horses and for storing/parking associated equipment. This isn't unreasonable when considering the use. When handling horses, tending to their feet etc. on a daily basis and when a farrier is fitting shoes, this needs to be on a level, mud free surface. There is an animal welfare consideration here. Equally stables need to be on an appropriate surface. It also allows vehicles to leave the site on an appropriate surface and not track mud onto the public highway.

The proposals are not unreasonable and are entirely what would be expected on such a site. The proposal is supported by the relevant planning policy.

### **5.2 Landscape and visual impact**

The proposed stables are timber, and black in colour. They sit naturally in the landscape and are not obtrusive. The site is not a high value landscape area. No high-level lighting is proposed. Therefore, there are no issues with light levels.

The stables, fence and hard standing are also appropriate in a rural area and not out of the ordinary for such a location.

It is therefore considered that there is no landscape and visual impact.

## **6 CONSIDERATIONS**

### **6.1 Green Belt Implications**

6.1.1 The site is within the Green Belt (albeit on a multiuse farm) where most development is inappropriate. Chapter 13 of the NPPF emphasises the importance of Green Belts and states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 137 states that the fundamental aim of Green Belts is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

6.1.2 Paragraph 149 of the NPPF covers exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt regarding the erection of new buildings. It directly references the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or change of use) 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. Appeal reference APP/X0415/X/17/3184571 also found that the keeping, schooling, riding, jumping etc. of horses for private leisure would constitute a 'recreational' purpose.

6.1.3 In relation to the change of use of the land from agriculture to equestrian, Paragraph 150 of the NPPF states that certain forms of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided that they preserve the openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. (e) states that material changes in the use of land, such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation and can be considered as per the above. In this instance, the proposed use for the site is to be equestrian which is considered to be regarded as outdoor sport and recreation.

6.1.4 Having regard to the above, the proposed development is considered to be an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt. The change of use of the land from agricultural to equestrian is acceptable and therefore the proposed structures provide appropriate facilities for outdoor recreation. However, as aforementioned,

stipulations arising to the preservation of the openness of the Green Belt, detrimental impacts on visual amenities and amenities of local residents are other aspects that need to be considered.

6.1.5 In terms of the impact on the openness of the Green Belt, as mentioned, Paragraph 137 of the NPPF attaches great importance to Green Belts and the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence.

## **6.2 The Change of Use of the Land**

6.2.1 In terms of built form, the proposed development would result in a stable block with a ridge height of 4.08 m and eaves height of 2.4 m. This would introduce new built form within an area which is presently devoid of built form and therefore there would be some impact upon the openness of the Green Belt. Nevertheless, the proposed stables are considered to be of an appropriate and reasonable scale and design which would provide for the stabling of horses. The proposal has otherwise been designed to feature a 'u' shaped form which provides for a less bulky form and would sit low within the landscape.

6.2.2 It is not considered that the change of use to the site would result in harm to the openness of the Green Belt. It is noted that the applicants have stated within their design and access statement that the site would be used for only equestrian use.

## **6.3 Design/character & appearance**

6.3.1 The NPPF sets out Core Planning principles for the operation of the planning system. One of the principles set out is that authorities should always seek to secure high quality design.

6.3.2 Local Plan policy EP3 states that development will only be permitted where its scale, layout, siting, height, design, external materials and uses are compatible with the character and amenities of the site itself, adjoining development and the locality in general. Poor designs which are out of scale or character with the surroundings will not be permitted.

6.3.3 The proposed stables would be set away from the street scene and consequently would not be highly visible from public viewpoints. The design, scale and materials proposed would be of a sympathetic design in keeping with the proposed use of the site. The height of the proposed stables is such that it would not appear dominant when viewed adjacent to the neighbouring dwellings.

6.3.4 The existing stables have a volume of 1,367 m<sup>3</sup> and area of 546.8 m<sup>2</sup> and there is a minimal increase in area and volume proposed but essential for the future profitability of the Two Counties Equestrian Business.

#### **6.4 Highway Safety/ Access Issues**

##### **6.4.1 Access.**

The scheme is designed to enable access for horse trailers using the existing access.

##### **6.4.2 Disabled Access/ Inclusive Access/ Access to Persons with Limited Mobility.**

The building would be accessible.

#### **6.5 Arboricultural / Ecological Implications**

The retention of the existing boundary trees and proposed new planting both landscape and as biodiversity / ecological benefits.

The proposed position will be close to trees but outside their root protection areas. These trees are behind an existing fence and far enough away such that there is no prospect of any damage occurring during construction, so no further protection needs to be provided.

#### **6.6 Impact on Other neighbouring properties/ Residential Amenity**

There would be no harm. This is with reference to the expectations of Policies CS12 and CS32, DBLP Appendix 3 and the NPPF regarding residential amenity

#### **6.7 Contamination/ Drainage**

It is expected that surface water is addressed through soakaways.

#### **6.8 Security/ Crime Prevention/ Exterior Lighting**

The building would be installed with CCTV complemented by ecological friendly lighting.

#### **6.9 Environmental Impact Assessment**

This has not been necessary.

#### **6.10 Air Limit Implications**

Due to the height of the building, there was no consultation with the Air Authorities.



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## 7 SUMMARY

7.1 Berry Farm is located along Whelpley Hill Road, Whelpley Hill. The site comprises a number of buildings that are being used for agricultural and equine activities. It is proposed to relocate the existing stables and construct 3 additional stables to meet demand and ensure sustainability of the existing business.

7.2 The proposed development will make use of existing land immediately adjacent existing equestrian facilities which is currently used for equestrian purposes. There would be minimal impact upon of the Green Belt's openness by introducing building operations and engineering operations supporting an equestrian use onto land historically used for agriculture with no supporting development. On balance, there is a case for the proposals with no overriding harm.

On balance the proposal is a sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF's economic, social and environmental objectives, with some economic benefit involved in the building's construction.

7.3 This application is for the re-location of existing stabling together with minor additional stabling to be established at Berry Farm. It is considered that the proposed change is acceptable, and this is supported by the Council's policies. It is considered that Berry Farm offers a site that is suitable for locating stables. The proposal is supported by national, regional and local planning policies and planning guidance and on this basis, it is hoped that the local authority can be supportive of the development.

**APPENDIX 1**

This application is supported by a suite of plans and documents including:

- Application Form
- Planning Drawings (as listed in the table below)
- Design, Access & Planning Statement (this document)
- Statement of Equestrian Need

<b>Drawing Reference</b>	<b>Drawing Description</b>
LDBF0020	Proposed Elevations – Block A (Elevations B & D)
LDBF0021	Proposed Elevations – Block A (Elevations A & C)
LDBF0022	Proposed Elevations – Block A (Elevation E)
LDBF0023	Proposed Floor Plan – Block A
LDBF0024	Proposed Roof Plan – Block A
LDBF0025	Proposed Elevations – Block B (Elevations I & J)
LDBF0026	Proposed Elevations – Block B (Elevations F & H)
LDBF0027	Proposed Elevations – Block B (Elevation G)
LDBF0028	Proposed Floor Plan – Block B
LDBF0029	Proposed Roof Plan – Block B
LDBF0030	Existing Elevations – Block 1
LDBF0031	Existing Elevations – Blocks 2, 3 & 4
LDBF0032	Existing Floor Plan – Blocks 1, 2, 3 & 4
LDBF0033	Location Plan
LDBF0034	Site Plan