

PLANNING

ELawrence

Formalisation of the existing equestrian use of the land which includes cross country equine training and four Pony/Riding Club hunter trials annually

Shimmings Farm, Off A272, Petworth

Design, Access, Heritage, Noise, Highways, Landscape, Ecology, Planning and Ecosystems Assessments – 2023

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1 - The site

The application site is located within Moor Farm, to the south of the A272 a short distance to the east of Petworth. It is within SDNP, close to Petworth conservation area and close to Petworth House and Park, which are Grade I listed.

The site is within the most diverse equestrian area within England and is widely known for a range of equestrian uses including, polo, hunting, cross country, show jumping, long distance riding, dressage, horse racing, showing, riding tuition, hacking and breeding. It is a huge local rural industry as well as being a sports and leisure pursuit for many residents and visitors. It attracts thousands of visitors to SDNP each year.

Some of the venues within South Downs National Park have included:

Cross country: Cowdray Park, Uppark Estate, Arundel Park, Goodwood Estate; Rogate, Petworth Park; and the application site.

Polo: Cowdray Park, Cowdray Estate, plus private venues in Chichester District.

Racing yards: Storrington; Arundel; Findon; Pulborough

2 - Proposal

This application is submitted without prejudice for the continued use of the long established equestrian use of the application site. The site and building have been used for equestrian activities since the early 1980's and in 1991 to 1994 permission was granted for cross country training and shows. 1991.

The proposal is seeking to formalise the existing equestrian use of the site, which includes cross country training, hacking, stabling, schooling, competitions and associated facilities. At the same time it is seeking to reduce the area of land that can be used for cross country training and shows.

3 – Legislation and Planning policy

Planning policies at all levels allow for development which requires a rural location. By their very nature equestrian buildings and sand schools require a rural location.

National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (Framework)

The Framework actively supports sustainable forms of development.

The Core principles of the Framework are to adopt a pro-active approach and in relation to the rural economy decisions should enable:

- a) the sustainable growth and the expansion of **all** types of business in rural areas through well-designed new buildings;
- b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses.
- c) Sustainable rural leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.

Paragraph 85 goes on to state that decisions should recognize that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found beyond existing settlements and in areas that are not well served by public transport. The use of previously developed land should be encouraged.

This positive approach to rural businesses is to promote a strong rural economy. As stated in the Framework **significant weight** (*my emphasis*) should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

Regarding meeting the needs of everyone the Framework states that the planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. Decisions should promote social interaction and should enable and support healthy lifestyles. Particularly if this would address identified local health issues and well-being needs. Regarding the provision of social and recreational facilities decisions should plan positively, ensure facilities to develop and modernize and ensure an integrated approach to the location of housing, economic and community facilities and services.

Paragraph 98 states that access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities.

In relation to design the Framework states that new development should function well and add to the overall quality of the area; establish a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of the site and reflect the identity of local surroundings, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. At the same time development should contribute to the natural and local environment, recognizing the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Regarding climate change the Framework actively encouraging the reduction of greenhouse gases and energy efficiency.

The proposed scheme has been designed specifically to comply with all of the above. As such, the scheme accords very closely with the Framework for the reasons set out in sections 6 to 17 of this statement.

Section 15 of the Framework deals with the natural environment and states that decisions should contribute to and enhance natural and local environments. Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty in national parks. The conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats is promoted.

The Purposes of SDNP

The purposes, duty and vision of SDNP are set out in the SDNP Partnership Management Plan.

The purposes include:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the SDNP by the public.

The objectives of SDNPA

- To conserve and greatly enhance the landscape and biodiversity assets of the SDNP by 2050.
- To educate people to understand and appreciate the assets of the park.
- To provide opportunities for everyone to access, enjoy, understand and value the assets of the park and thus use its resources more responsibly.
- To develop thriving communities.

- To foster successful farming, forestry, tourism and other businesses to contribute to the identity and special qualities of the SDNP.
- To enable people to experience, understand, enjoy and respect the SDNP with everyone working together to benefit the SDNP.
- To conserve lowland landscapes and heritage.
- Protect and manage habitats.
- Enhance the relationship between people and the landscape.

South Downs Local Plan 2019 (LP)

Policies SD1, SD2, SD4, SD5, SD6, SD7, SD8, SD9, SD11, SD12, SD13, SD15, SD20, SD34, SD40 and SD43 of the LP are all relevant to the proposal. Collectively they:

- Adopt a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- Allow for proposals that have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute goods and services.
- Allow for proposals that conserve and enhance the landscape.
- Promote the retention and expansion of trees, and hedgerows.
- Require developments to follow a landscape-led approach.
- Require proposals to preserve the visual integrity, identity and scenic quality of the National Park.
- Require proposals to conserve the relative tranquillity.
- Require proposals to conserve and enhance the intrinsic quality of dark skies.
- Require proposals to conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
- Proposals should contribute to bridleways and footpaths.
- Seek to protect the character and appearance of heritage assets and to protect their significance.
- New development should incorporate sustainable design features.

Policy 34 seeks to sustain the rural economy and support proposals that foster the economic and social well-being of local communities provided they promote and protect farming, forestry and tourism; promote and protect green businesses linked to ecosystem services; support supply chains and encourage closer ties between rural businesses; provide flexibility for existing businesses to secure future resilience and protect local jobs;

Policy SD40 supports farm diversification where it:

- Contributes to the first purpose of the National Park by providing long term benefit to the farming business.
- The diversification remains subsidiary to the agricultural use in terms of physical scale and environmental impact.
- The proposal does not cause severance or disruption to the agricultural holding.
- The proposal makes use of existing buildings.
- Outdoor storage is provided as a minor ancillary element of other uses.
-

Policy SD43 supports new and expanded community facilities where:

There is a local need

The scale of the proposal is proportionate to the local area

There has been prior local community engagement

They are accessible and inclusive to the local community.
Appropriate consideration has been given to shared use.

Policy SD24 of the LP deals specifically with equestrian uses and buildings. Such development is supported where:

- The proposal is of a scale that is compatible with the landscape.
- It is designed well, appropriately located and responds to the landscape.
- Existing buildings are re-used where possible.
- New buildings and facilities are located close to existing buildings.
- The proposal is appropriately located in relation to accessibility.
- The proposal includes new or supplementary landscape features.
- The proposal demonstrates a conservation-based land management approach.

South Downs - The Design Guide - (SPD)

The SPD advocates a landscape led approach to design and advises that the landscape strategy stage is a key part of the design process. Similarly, geology, topography, water, heritage, ecology, movement routes, settlement patterns and perceptual qualities can all inform development layouts. The SPD states that proposals need to set out biodiversity gains. Opportunities should be taken to enhance movement networks for people and wildlife and for new development to enhance character where possible. The SPD specifically addresses and advocates the use of sustainable drainage. It highlights the benefits of filtration from the ground surface as it removes sediment and other particles, improving water quality. Other than basic principles and the SUDs advice the SPD does not address equestrian developments. See SPD page 41.

South Downs Equestrian Technical Advice Note – (TAN)

South Downs explains that **equestrian activity and land use has an important role in SDNP both for its contribution to the local economy and recreation and for its contribution to land management.** It States:

“Good land management can have a positive impact on horse health as well as the wider environment and biodiversity. With good management horses can be very effective grazing animals for managing species-rich grasslands. By adopting some key land management considerations and good practice principles, the recreational enjoyment of horses can be fully realised, whilst bringing positive benefits to the landscape and helping to strengthen local economic and social wellbeing.

The purpose of Policy SD24: Equestrian Uses, is to ensure the careful planning and design of equestrian development and the sensitive management of land on which horses are kept. It seeks to permit equestrian activities that have a positive impact and protect the National Park’s landscapes. Although SD24 is a key policy against which equestrian development proposals will be assessed, the SDLP should be read as a whole and there will be other policies relevant to development proposals. See Section 1.1

- *Generally the more comprehensive the information provided by an applicant the better. Where applicable, it will be helpful to include detail on the following: X Location and dimensions of any proposed structures and fencing. X Materials proposed for structures and fencing. These will need to be locally characteristic and*

natural in appearance e.g. unpainted timber cladding, unpainted steel, simple grey concrete roof, and equine friendly post and wire fencing or similar visually unobtrusive options, such as dark posts with electric tape; X Hard and soft landscaping will need to demonstrate it is characteristic (i.e. native species found locally) and that planting delivers biodiversity net gain. All surfaces aside from stables, yards and muck heap bases, should be permeable where possible. Outdoor arenas/manèges are best surfaced with darker materials and selected for sustainability (e.g. recycled or low carbon impact materials). Avoid materials likely to remain long-term in the environment; X A Conservation-based Land Management Plan should be submitted as part of an application to demonstrate how the land will be managed, using best practice principles that also benefit horse welfare, landscape and biodiversity.”

Petworth Neighbourhood Plan

The vision for Petworth is that by 2033 it will be seen as a 21st Century market town with a conserved and enhanced historic core. Policy PP2 requires that development should respect the landscape and townscape, along with heritage assets and important views.

The environment, sustainability and design objectives and policy ESD1 require development to be design led and to respect neighbouring buildings, the wider setting within the town and the towns setting within the SDNP. Development should make best use of land and should protect peoples experience of the special qualities of SDNP. Policy ESD8 encourages low carbon approaches to all development.

Planning Assessment

4 - Introduction

Both the proposal and this statement follow a landscape led approach, which includes both the built and natural environment. As stated in the TAN:

“Negative landscape impacts can be caused by poorly sited and designed field shelters, fencing, field sub-division, buildings, arenas, tracks, walkers, over-grazing, waste storage and intensive land use.”

The TAN advocates:

- Uncut pasture for winter grazing;
- Chestnut fencing;
- Extensive paddocks and low grazing ratios;
- Conservation grazing.

Examples of equestrian development that is likely to be unacceptable includes:

- Levelling to provide flat riding areas;
- Removing historic field boundaries and field sub-division;
- Creating bunds;
- Large buildings with rooflights;
- Floodlit arenas; numerous stables in constrained sites.

- Proliferation of equestrian activity.
- Sensitive landscapes.

Positive design features include:

- Re-use existing buildings;
- Use locally appropriate materials;
- Maximise ecosystem services;
- Keep hard surfaces for parking to a minimum.
- Avoid external lighting;
- Reinforce or restore hedgerows;
- Provide adequate storage for paraphernalia;
- Work with existing levels;
- Keep tracks narrow and informal.

5 - Historic Equestrian Background

Equestrian activities have taken place on the Leconfield estate and the surrounding area for centuries. In the 1750's the formal gardens at Petworth House were swept away and replaced with a natural looking landscape that was designed by Capability Brown. The works affected some 294 hectares and took 12 years to complete. The focus of the park is a serpentine lake framed by natural parkland and hills.

Between 1773 and the 1940's the Leconfield Estate was farmed by Lord Leconfield. Kennels were built within Petworth Park for the fox hounds and hunting was centered around Petworth Park and Shimmings Farm, which includes the application site and surrounding area. The hounds continue to be housed in the same kennels at Petworth Park. The hunt horses were kept at Shimmings Farm until the 1970's. Since then, hunt horses have continued to be ridden on the farm, both with and without the hounds. Throughout this period natural wood jumps were formed in hedges, woodland and fields, along with water features.

After the first world war hunts began to establish Pony Clubs, with the aim of teaching children to ride and care for their ponies and to make horse riding accessible to more children. The Lord Leconfield Hunt Pony Club was one of the first pony clubs to be established in Great Britain in 1918. It has been based within and around the Leconfield estate ever since. Such is their popularity riding clubs started to evolve to provide similar experiences for adults. Both Pony Clubs and Riding Clubs rely on dedicated club fields and local venues for training and events.

For example, until very recent times the Lord Leconfield Hunt Pony Club hosted a sponsored ride within Petworth Park once a year, with the proceeds being donated to a local charity. The event was open to anyone and the horses and riders all met close to Petworth House. The ride started around the house and lake, before moving into and around the hills. Mobile jumps were placed around the park to replicate years past. The huntsmen and hounds joined in with the rides. Other groups also have and do host sponsored rides within the listed parkland. These events attract many spectators.

Outside the registered park the heavy work horses were kept and heavy and competition horses were bred at Shimmings Farm. These young horses were kept, reared, handled and trained on the land.

Thus, working and pleasure horses and ponies for breeding, hacking, jumping and hunting have been an integral and significant part of Petworth Park, Petworth and the Leconfield Estate for generations.

6 - The Applicants Farming and Equine Enterprise (Farm Diversification Assessment)

Development of the enterprise since 1980

The farm Enterprise extends to some 1700 acres and comprises a three-generation tenanted farm that forms part of the Leconfield Estate. It has been farmed by the applicant since 1980/1981 and includes Moor Farm, Allfields Farm, Balls Cross and Keyfox Farm and Shimmings Farm. The vast majority of the farming is arable, with 80 hectares of permanent grass in the area known as Shimmings Farm. This includes the application site.

When the applicants took on Shimmings Farm it was in a degraded state, the hedges were in a very poor condition, the fields were separated by barbed wire and the land was poached. The applicants set about clearing the barbed wire and replacing it with hedges and they spent several years restoring the wide hedging that had been planted to contain the heavy working horses. They re-seeded the land and cleared up after the 1987 storm. They opened the land up to the public by keeping footpaths through the land open and maintaining five kissing gates.

The land at Shimming Farm is not suitable for arable farming, although the grass on some of the less steep areas was initially cut for silage for winter feed. Between 1980 and 2000 sheep and cows were grazed on the application site and surrounding land. In addition, the applicants bred horses. 10 brood mares and their offspring were kept on the application site and used the brick built building on the application site. Two stallions were also kept on the land. In particular, the building was used for foaling, to house mares and foals and to store their feedstuff. The young horses were handled and trained on the application site. They would be caught and placed in wooden pens along the southern side of one of the access tracks, whilst being seen by the farrier, vets, etc. and to be brushed, blanketed, tacked up, etc. They were taught to load in trailers and lorries parked in the parking area beside the farm building.

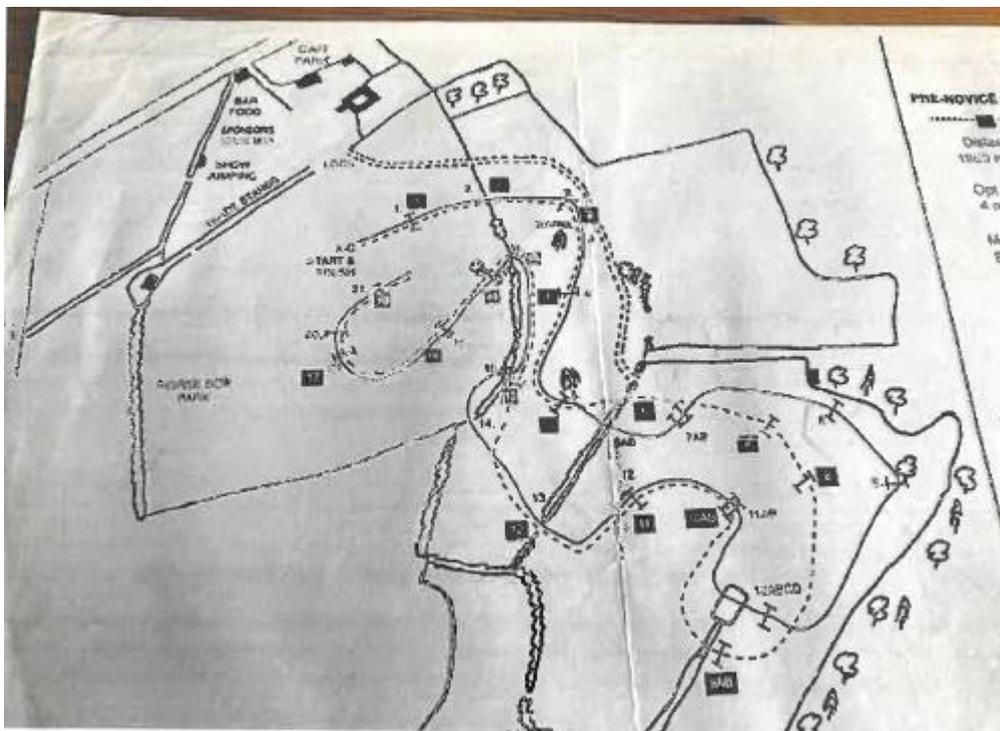
The whole of the triangular parcel of land where the building is located was developed for a field hospital during the second world war. The existing building was one of several field hospital buildings built on the site and the open area was used for parking. When the applicants first began farming the land in 1981 they restored the building specifically for equestrian purposes and have used it for equestrian purposes ever since. Similarly, the land around the building has been used for equestrian purposes, including, parking, schooling, riding and as a function area during riding events held at Shimmings Farm.

By 1990 the horse breeding activities were cut back and regular sheep worrying made the grazing of sheep on much of Shimmings Farm impractical. Also, the raising of beef suckler cows and calves at Shimmings Farm became economically challenging. These activities at Shimmings Farm were not fully viable and so the applicants looked to diversify to raise the funds required to maintain and improve the land and its biodiversity.

It made sense to adapt and diversify their existing equine activities and to make use of their considerable equine knowledge and expertise, whilst meeting a real local equine need. Hence, the applicants established their 'grass roots' equine training and event location for children and adults.

In 1991 planning permission (PW/50/91) was granted for an equestrian schooling course. In 1992 planning permission (PW/62/92) was granted for the retention of the schooling course and the holding of one BHS horse trial and four hunter trials per year. These training events and competitions were attended by individuals and groups, including pony clubs and riding clubs. The events attracted some 200 competitors and many spectators per event each year. The site was and has continued to be known as Petworth X-country Schooling Course. It has proved to be hugely popular. In 1994 planning permission (94/02379/REN) was granted for the continued equestrian use of the site.

Below is a copy of a plan that shows one of the cross-country course layouts, along with other facilities provided on show days. These include a show jumping arena, trade stands and food locations and horse box parking.



Over the years the courses were moved around and the jumps replaced as required. Most jumps were removed and stored in the barn when the course closed over the winter, although water jumps and those fixed to the ground or between hedges were left on the land. No complaints were ever received regarding these changes, the equine training activities or the events. On the contrary they were widely supported and extremely well attended by local residents, including users of the public footpath network at Shimmings Farm. The activities developed over the years and became a popular and affordable training venue for pony clubs and riding clubs, who employed professional instructors to teach riding skills and horse and pony welfare for all.

Local residents have and do frequently sit on the seats alongside the elevated wall on the western side of Shimmings Farm to watch from a distance the training and competing of horses and ponies and the grazing of herds of horses and ponies in a natural environment.

In 1995 cattle prices plummeted following mad cow disease, which was then followed by foot and mouth disease in 2002. Subsequently a member of the public with four dogs was injured by one of the cows. This led to calls for all of the footpaths to be double fenced. Hence the decision was made not to keep any cattle at Shimmings Farm. Instead, horses were grazed and in the winter sheep were routinely grazed for two months, both on the application site and the immediately adjacent land. This was to remove the need to use fertilisers or weedkillers on the land. The sheep are owned by local shepherds and no grazing fee is charged as it would be uneconomic for the shepherds. Hence economically, the whole of Shimmings Farm was turned over to equestrian uses. This change ultimately led to the redundancy of two full time rural workers, which affected the cross country activities as there were not as many staff to maintain the cross-country jumps. The applicants decided to temporarily cease holding competition events whilst they reorganized the equestrian uses on Shimmings Farm, but retained some of the jumps and continued with cross country schooling and hacking. To supplement their income the applicants' winter grazed polo ponies, however this increasingly resulted in the land being poached and unsightly. It damaged the land so that it could not safely be used for cross country events. Accordingly, in 2015 they were in a position where they did not need to renew any contracts and so were able to start improving the cross country facility, so that it would remain the main income generating use on the land, as well as providing a community facility.

By 2016 the applicants had fully restored the land and were in a position to replace the then existing jumps, which no longer complied with health and safety regulations. In doing this they decided to design a new course. They were advised that they required planning permission for the replacement and positioning of some of the jumps, despite the fact that, other than a few fixed jumps, the fences could be moved around the originally approved site. They did not question the advice received and submitted an application.

In considering the application SDNPA directed that the application should be dealt with by Chichester DC. This was on the basis that:

“The Direction

Under the provisions of the Section 101 Agency Agreement between the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and Chichester District Council effective from 1 st October 2017, although the above planning application, SDNP/17/04168/FUL is classed as ‘major’ in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 it is not considered by the SDNPA to be likely to have a significant effect on the purposes for which the South Downs National Park has been designated.

In consequence, the SDNPA hereby directs and authorises that this application can be determined, or otherwise dealt with, by Chichester District Council.

Reason for the Direction

Although this application is major in terms of site size, the proposals appear to relate to modifications to an existing use of land and structures, rather than the introduction of a wholly new use in the open countryside. The development is therefore considered to be of local rather than strategic significance.”

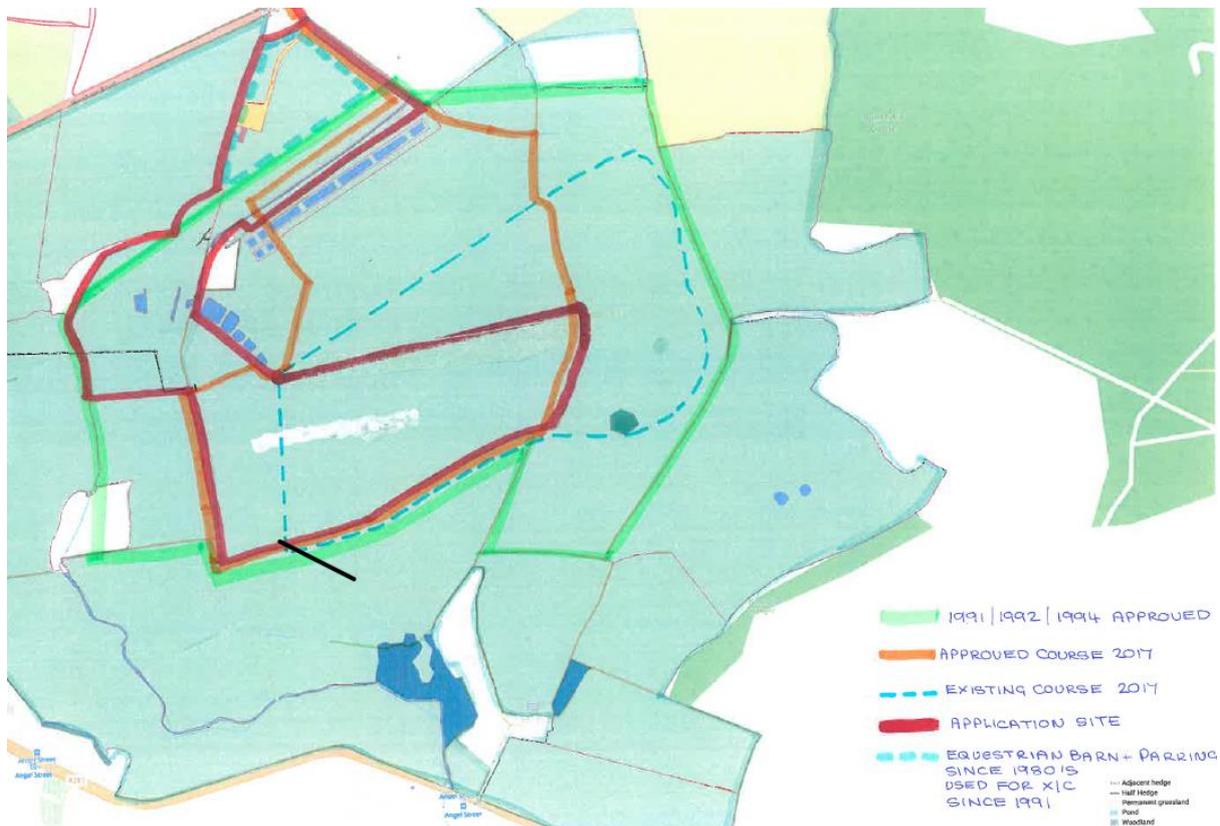
In approving the application, the delegated report stated:

“This application seeks to enlarge the existing permission, with the existing permission not appear to cause significant harm in this landscape the extension of the site is considered reasonable.”

It should be noted that whilst the proposed course did not use all of the approved cross-country course, SDNPA did not ask or require the cessation of the full approved course.

The applicants did not implement the permission because it did not cover the activities applied for, the need for jumps to meet differing abilities, or the low key hunter trials they were wanting to continue with. Instead, they continued as they had operated over the years, moving the courses around, replacing and revamping some of the existing jumps and providing a wider range of jumps to meet differing abilities. This is how they had operated since the first approvals in the 1990's and is no different to other low key cross country courses within SDNP.

In 2022 the council asked the applicants to submit a formal application after they had received a complaint from one person. This has been the only complaint ever received since 1992. In response the applicants asked a local agricultural agent to submit an application for them. The plan below shows the original approved cross-country course, the course as it was used in 2017, the course approved in 2017, the parking area and building used for equestrian purposes since the 1980s and which has served all equestrian uses since then and the current application site. With the proposal the applicants will agree to a material reduction in the size of the approved equestrian cross country courses from some 19 hectares to some 11.5 hectares.



The current Enterprise including size, amount, use, ecosystems and management

Other than Shimmings Farm, the Farm Enterprise comprises woodland and land that is environmentally and sensitively arable farmed (See appendix 2 for countryside stewardship maps).

As stated above Shimmings Farm is used for two equestrian activities. Two herds of retired and resting horses and ponies are grazed primarily on the southern section of the farm. They are fed hay

from the flower rich plots grown on the farm, thus helping to fund the wildlife plots and margins. It also helps spread the wild flower seeds within Shimmings Farm.

The applicants operate a modest cross country training course for individuals, and organized individual groups. It is primarily used by individuals, pony clubs and riding clubs, who may bring their own instructors, or receive tuition from Simon, who runs the activities and is himself an experienced and fully qualified riding instructor. Pony clubs are always given a discount rate as the main objective of the facility is to teach young people to ride safely and care for their horses correctly. This use began in 1992 and is long established.

This year the facility has been used by the following Pony Clubs and Riding Clubs.

Cowdray PC
Goodwood PC
Lord Leconfield PC
Petersfield PC
Crawley and Horsham PC
South Downs West PC
South Downs East PC
Chiddingfold PC

Arundel and district RC
Rudgwick RC
West Sussex RC
Meon Valley RC
Horsham RC
Rotate RC

This is in addition to Individual equestrian instructors who hold one to one or very small group clinics.

The facility is rented out in two hour slots daily and is weather dependent. Single group tuition can accommodate no more than six people. If a single pony or riding club books the course they may have two groups on separate parts of the course at any one time. This is normal for all training cross country courses. Typically, the groups walk their horses between jumps and then individually jump the obstacle after being advised on how to approach it, etc.

In a quiet week six people may use the course. In a busy week during school holidays there can be 30 – 40 people. It is usually quiet during the week and busier at weekends and during school holidays.

Small groups of small pony club children aged up to 6/7 years are staffed at a ratio of 10 children to three adults. Older children and adults are staffed at a ratio of up to six people per instructor. Where activities do not involve riding the horses, they are simply stood in the pens that were previously used by the brood mares and youngstock. Such activities can include course walking, cleaning tack, having a picnic or learning associated with pony club badges and tests.

The applicants do not want to operate BHS hunter trials again as they are too large. Instead, they would like to run up to 4 unaffiliated 'grass roots' hunter trials per year. This is aimed at local pony and riding clubs. Not only does the income help pay the farm rent, it raises funds for the pony clubs that host the events under the management of Simon. This is important as pony clubs are a charity that was created to make riding tuition affordable for all who have or can borrow a pony.

It should be noted that there is no amplified sound systems or music on the site.

The operating season varies depending on the weather. If the autumn is dry tuition could go on until the end of October. In the spring the course starts again as soon as the ground is dry. This is important as those wanting to take part in events at the start of the main eventing season. They need their horses to be fit to avoid injury and accidents to both riders and horses/ponies. Also, the riders and in particular children need to practice and may be starting the year on a different pony. Hence the season may start at the end of February. However, for safety reasons the course has to be dry and safe. The land at Shimmings Farm is particularly good and free draining. It is professionally managed and all approaches to the jumps are maintained to a very high standard. (As a training facility the land does not get subject to the same wear and tear as a competition venue, where large numbers of horses are continually going over the land at speed). For health and safety reasons some jumps do now have to be attached to the ground. Steps and water jumps are fixed. Both steps and water jumps are important for horses and riders to learn how to negotiate. Where any jumps are damaged, they are removed. The Jumps can be dismantled and stored during the winter months. The arguments against doing this are: It takes a huge amount of time to dismantle and move a course and even longer to build one. Alignment and distances between jumps are critical for health and safety reasons. Not only is this expensive, the works involved at the start and end of the season can damage the ground and grass. From a distance the most notable part of a natural timber jump is the flags on either side. These are removed routinely and only put out when the course is in use.

There are some 59 jumps on the land, of which some two thirds are moveable. They are all constructed from timber other than the water jumps and a number comprise the trunks from fallen trees. The jumps do contribute to wildlife habitats and shelters, etc. The course and its use benefit wildlife. For example, the land is kept as rough pasture land with little need for fertilisers. The horse and sheep droppings act as natural fertilisers and a food source for dung beetles. In turn the dung beetles are eaten by birds of prey and other birds and mammals. The water jumps are used as a wildlife habitat, watering station and attract insects, etc, that in turn attract birds and bats. The jumps provide shelter and feeding grounds for small mammals and insects, etc. The reason for so many jumps is to accommodate all ages and skill levels. Jumps will be moved around and some removed to suit demand. This number of jumps is typical of a cross country venue.

Regarding the number of jumps, by comparison there are some 150 jumps at Fair Oak, which are routinely replaced and moved around. Similarly, there are over 100 jumps at Coombelands. 59 jumps is exceptionally small given the need to provide jumps of various heights and complexity.

Regarding employment, the equestrian facilities provide employment for one full time and several part time staff. They also provide direct employment for 40/50 instructors and indirect employment for farriers, vets, feed merchants etc.

During the operating season, the existing equine barn is used as a meeting/emergency point and includes a W.C, fire extinguishers, wash basin and health and safety documentation. When the site is not being used for training or events it is used for a staff toilet, meeting point and for the storage of horse rugs and hay. It may occasionally be used to stable horses in the winter if required. No works have been done to the exterior of this established equestrian (Non-Agricultural) barn and none are proposed. The barn will remain as shown below.



The parking area outside the barn is used daily by farm staff, vets, farriers, physiotherapists, hay deliveries, farm machinery used on the farm and horse boxes and trailers associated with the grazing of horses and ponies and those visiting the cross-country course for training and events. The parking area to the north of the barn was previously occupied by a field hospital building and parking. Whilst the building was removed many years ago the footings and base remain. They have been allowed to grass over and very occasionally a top dressing of Fittleworth stone is applied to the ground. The access, parking and turning area has been maintained in this way for many years. This access, parking and turning area is allowed to grass over after each stone dressing, yet remains ideal for parking and access for its stated lawful uses.

The photograph below looks towards the barn and parking area from the access gate a short distance in from the A272. It shows the parking area grassed over after its last recent topping and the barn. This view will not change with the proposal. There is a sheep trailer to the side of the barn within the parking area. The cross country course is on the far side of the barn and in the rear field to the left of the barn. No jumps are visible.



The two photographs below show the cross country course in the rear field. Again, no jumps are visible.



It should be noted that no new buildings are proposed. The jumps are all small, removable and constructed from natural, locally sourced timber. The water jump acts as a waterhole for wild and grazed animals and for the wintering of wildfowl. The equine use is a recreational activity that is extensive, low-key and has to be undertaken in the open countryside. Cross-country originates from hunting and both horse riding and other equestrian uses are at the heart of Petworth and this part of SDNP.

The other current uses of the Shimmings Farm include:

- Unrestricted public access for walking and dog walking.
- Hacking by huntsmen with and without the hounds kenneled at Petworth Park Kennels. (Which has taken place on the land since at least the 1700's).
- Hacking by liveries and others.
- Environmental enhancements, which are ongoing.

If the equine activities ceased at Shimmings Farm, the alternative would be to double fence the public rights of way, (Subdividing the historic open fields), intensively grazing sheep and horses and to introduce small areas of commercial arable crops. The barn and access would still ne used for access, parking, staff W.C and as a meeting point. Unfortunately, such use would not produce the funds necessary to maintain the current environmentally friendly farming system at Shimmings Farm.

7 – Heritage and landscape assessments

The site is not within Petworth Conservation Area or within 300 metres of any heritage assets.

The application site is on the edge of the Shimmings Valley, where the ancient field systems and sharply defined eastern edge of Petworth town can be appreciated. Historically Shimmings Farm has been used for equine grazing, breeding and sports activities.

The proposal does not affect the ancient field system whatsoever. Indeed, the equine activities are designed to protect and reinforce them. They also reflect and reinforce the historic equine use of the land. The course is sufficiently distance from the edge of the settlement and either sufficiently distance or screened by tall mature hedges from the footpaths, to ensure that it is visually discreet. It is not comparable to the polo fields and events set in the immediate grounds of Cowdray House, on the edge of Midhurst and at Selham, which have the full support of SDNPA. Similarly, the proposal is a far cry from the racecourse, cross country course and former dressage arena at the front of Goodwood House. It is modest and low key.

The photographs attached at appendix A clearly show that the proposal does not impact on the setting of any listed buildings, Petworth Conservation Area or Petworth Park. Even from Monument Hill at Petworth Park the jumps are not discernible. From the surrounding area where the low key rustic jumps can be glimpsed, they simply reinforce the historic rural and equestrian character and use of the land.

The course is designed to follow the land form and the only permanent building is a long established rural building that has been used for equestrian purposes for many years. The vast majority of the jumps are moveable. It is an expansive and very low key use on an area for land that has been used for equestrian use for centuries rather than generations.

8 – Transport Statement

Access

Access to the course is via the long established and existing entrance off the A272 Horsham Road. This access also serves an existing equestrian yard and Shimmings Farm. The crossover is 10 metres wide and it joins a straight section of the A272, where visibility from the crossover and forward visibility along the A272 is very good.

The access has served Petworth Cross Country and various other equine activities since 1991, as well as sheep grazing during the winter months. This has included:

- cross country schooling from February/March to October/November for individuals and groups. Typically, with professional instructors.
- The hosting hunter trials and County wide Cross country shows.
- Cross country hacking/riding by individuals and groups including huntsmen, liveries, colleagues, friends, etc.
- A commercial livery yard.
- Access to two herds of commercially grazed retired and resting horses.
- Mares and foals.
- Over-wintering polo ponies.

These activities all generate vehicular traffic, including farm machinery, sheep trailers, hay and haylage transport, horse trailers, horse boxes, cars and bicycles.

Parking takes place in the informal parking area immediately adjacent to the existing equine barn. Prior to the use of this barn for equestrian purposes, it comprised one of several field hospitals built on the site during the second world war.

Travel Plan

Access to the site for all vehicles will be via the existing long-established access off the A272. This access is familiar to all of the pony and riding clubs that have used the facility over the years. Parking will continue to take place within the parking area adjacent to the barn. When the occasional competition takes place overflow parking would be accommodated adjacent to the existing access road adjacent to the existing horse pens. (This will occur no more than 4 times a year and during the summer months).

Direction signs will be displayed along the A272 for these occasional larger events. This will give advance notice to all motorists using the A272. (The signs will only be displayed on the days of the competitions).

Horse box/trailer sharing is already very common and is encouraged. Horses prefer travelling with company and the children similarly enjoy travelling with friends.

Equine Management Plan

Droppings – As with all such venues all participants are responsible for picking up and taking home their horses/ponies droppings. It is rare for any droppings to be left behind. Notwithstanding this, a muck container and muck scoop is provided in the parking area for dropping left by ridden horses. This put in the equine building at the end of the day and removed to the applicant's main farm manure heap as required. The manure produced across the farm is used to produce compost.

Dropping on the course are minimal and so are only picked up weekly. By leaving a few droppings for several days does encourage dung beetles which are an important food source for larger birds.

Land management – The land is exceptionally well managed. It is cut, grazed and rolled as required. For safety reasons it could not be used for training and competitions if it was poached or devoid of a good covering of grass.

Jumps – The jumps are repaired and replaced as required for health and safety reasons.

9 – Ecology

See separate ecology assessment.

Also, see farm enterprise sections for details, along with the plans attached at appendix B show the Mid Tier Countryside Stewardship management of the overall farming enterprise, which are extensive.

In 2022 the applicants won the Farming and Wildlife Group Southeast's Woodpecker Award for their work in delivering exceptional conservation benefits to the local environment. As stated in the Local awards publication:

FARMING AWARD



Richard and Mark Chandler, of Moor Farm Petworth, have won Farming and Wildlife Group Southeast's "Woodpecker Award" for their work for conservation, in "delivering exceptional conservation benefits to the local environment" to quote the award certificate.

The Group covers Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, so it really is a prestigious achievement. And it is not the first such conservation award they have won either. To win this they had to demonstrate a high level of conservation friendly activity, for instance leaving strips of land amongst growing crops allowing wild flowers to grow that attracted insects. They operate a cultivation regime that is virtually insecticide free, relying instead upon natural pest control using populations of insects flourishing in the wild strips.

Around the farm skylarks, yellowhammers and nightingales can be heard. Birds of prey seen regularly include common buzzards, red kites, sparrowhawks, kestrels. The farm's fishing lakes abound in dragonflies and damselflies, as well as waterfowl of various kinds while the lane and track verges attract butterflies and other insects.

10 – Drainage and water neutrality

Surface water drains directly into the ground and excess water into the surrounding grassland. Foul water is served by the existing septic tank located close to the barn.

The water jump and surrounding grassland also double as:

- A winter feeding and watering ground for wildfowl.
- Pasture land and waterhole for wild and grazed animals.
- A pond for insects, invertebrates, small mammals, etc.

It dramatically reduced the need for imported water for grazed animals.

The toilet and sink in the barn are used by employees, grass livery owners when they visit their horses, vets and other people associated with the welfare of livestock and farming on the land. Very occasionally a visiting rider may use the facilities.

During the occasional competitions potaloos with wash basins are hired in. Hence, no mains water is used or discharged.

With the proposal no changes are proposed.

11 – Flood Risk Assessment

The site is not located in an area at risk of flooding and the proposal will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. No new buildings are proposed and the access and hardstanding comprise a top dressing of porous Fittleworth stone over an existing porous hard surface.

12 – Lighting assessment

N/A No external lighting is proposed or necessary.

13 - Noise Assessment

The equine activities on the site have taken place over many years, without complaint. The proposal is for a quiet activity. It involves no music or loudspeakers and requires a quiet environment where both riders and their horses/ponies can concentrate on learning skills.

14 – Environmental Benefits

Together the income from the grazing of retired and resting horses and the cross country schooling and shows pays for the maintenance of Shimmings Farm and contributes to the environmental enhancements both at Shimmings Farm and the enterprise as a whole. Environmentally friendly farming is of paramount importance to the applicants. They embarked on a countryside stewardship scheme in 2001 and have worked closely with the Wildlife Trust. With both wildlife grants and the income from the equestrian uses at Shimmings Farm they have:

- Planted 2 kilometres of new hedgerows.
- Repaired gaps in existing hedgerows.
- Created 6 metre wide grass margins around arable fields to protect water courses;
- Planted trees into hedge lines.

- Thickened the old heavy horses hedge-line through Shimmings Farm to help wildlife.
- Worked closely with Sussex Wildlife to create several kilometres of bat flight lines. This is to help the bats from Ebernoe Common access feeding areas more safely from predation. (Ebernoe Common is considered one of the most important sites for bats worldwide).
- Creation of ponds and fishing lakes.
- Conduct guided tours around the farm to show and explain the benefits of environmentally sustainable farm stewardship.
- The maintenance, including reseeded with wild paddock mixes of the pasture land.
- The maintenance of the public rights of way in an environmentally friendly manner.
- The maintenance of 5 kissing gates, which facilitate public access to Shimmings Farm.
- The employment of two full time local rural workers.
- The formation of a butterfly bank.
- The formation of wildflower strips within arable crops designed to attract beneficial birds and insects, which remove the need to spray crops with insecticides. (These wildflower strips are mowed for hay, which is fed to the resting horses. The flower seeds then go into the pasture land at Shimmings through the horse dung.

Drawing EL/03 shows a snapshot of the Mid-Tier Countryside Stewardship management of the overall farming enterprise, which are extensive.

We would strongly advise SDNPA officers to visit the farm for a tour and talk to fully appreciate the landscape, conservation and ecology led approach of the farm. It is exceptional.

15 - Social Benefits

- The environmentally sensitive farming practices provide a varied landscape which benefits the experiences and wellbeing of residents and visitors.
- The applicants host farm tours to show and explain their environmental practices, this providing education, knowledge and local interest in the environmental farming and its importance to the landscape and ecology within the National Park.
- Provides equestrian tuition and leisure for children and adults, which benefits the wellbeing of children and adults, provides education, enjoyment, exercise, improves safety and promotes better equine welfare.
- Watching the equine activities on Shimmings Farm is popular and is enjoyed by local residents, parents and visitors.
- The equine activities provide considerable direct and indirect employment for local people.
- Provides safe and natural homes for 34 retired and resting horses that are kept as two separate herds.

16 - Economic Benefits

- Aid the viability of the enterprise both through the income it generates and the way the activities integrate with the farming practices.
- Considerable direct and indirect employment.

Overall, the equestrian activities at Shimmings Farm are integral to the viability and success of this mixed and sensitively farmed enterprise.

17 – Policy conclusion

For the reasons set out in this statement and associated appendices the proposal complies fully with the objectives of SDNP and the policies and advice set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2023, the SDNP Local Plan, the SPD and the TAN.

18 – Ecosystems Statement

Introduction

The proposal is for the continuation of an equine cross-country training course and associated access, use of existing equine farm building, access and parking. It is a use that has taken place on Shimmings Farm since 1991 and prior to that the site was used for the breeding of horses and the over-wintering of polo ponies. No alterations are proposed to the existing building and the insertion of a toilet within the building does not amount to development.

This statement demonstrates that the proposal complies with policy SD2 of the South Downs Local Plan 2019

Policy SD2

Policy SD2 explains that Ecosystem Services are the benefits that people and society get from the natural environment. It goes on to identify four aspects of ecoservices in the SDNP. They include:

Supporting Services offered by flora, fauna and micro-organisms.

Provisioning services which relate to the products and productivity of the natural environment.

Regulating services are the controls from the natural environment.

Cultural services relate to people's enjoyment of the National Park and its special qualities.

All of these services can be utilised and enhanced.

With this in mind policy SD2 seeks to ensure that all proposals have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute goods and services.

The property and the proposal

Landscape Mapping

The application site is situated within a mixed Landscape Character Type area. Its key characteristics are steep valleys, rivers, streams, irregular field patterns, an historic settlement, isolated farmsteads and woodland. The guidance for integrating development into the landscape includes:

- Maintaining their form and pattern.
- Conserving their setting.
- Proposals should reflect the local vernacular.
- Use planting that blends with the valley woodlands and hedgerows.

Positive impacts

The proposal complies with policy SD2 of the SDLP in the following ways:

- Sustainable and environmentally friendly management of land and water
- Protects and provides more, better and joined up natural habitats.
- Conserves water resources
- Manages and reduces the risk of flooding
- Provide education and a better understanding of the SDNP and its local history;
- Improves opportunities for people's health and wellbeing

- Provides opportunities for access to the natural and cultural resources of the SDNP.
- Reflects and continues with a dominant historic equine use on the Leconfield Estate.
- Provides significant on-going biodiversity net gains.
- Makes full and appropriate use of existing land and building.

This will be achieved in the following ways:

- The use will make use of an existing farm and equine access, parking area and building.
- The use will be accommodated on land with a long and established equine which has included cross county training and events dating back to 1991; horse breeding dating back to heavy horses and more recently the breeding of event horses since 1981; the commercial grazing of recreational horses and polo ponies for many years; and the grazing of retired and resting horses.
- No new buildings are proposed and all jumps are small, constructed from natural locally sourced timber and removeable.
- The land will be professionally managed and maintained as pastureland, with an emphasis on ecosystems and conservation of the historic landform.
- The facility will remove the need to travel greater distances for comparable facilities, thus helping climate change.
- The use will maintain the historic landscape.

Negative impacts

The jumps will be visible, albeit they are made from natural materials, are small, visually discrete and removeable. The reality is that they are insignificant in views from all public places and only really noticeable when flags are placed on either side of each jump during use.

The use will bring people and horses onto the land, which we feel is entirely appropriate. This is because Shimmings Farm is an area where public access (Both walking and ridden) has been encouraged for generations. The land has actively been used for ridden equine activities since the C17th.

Conclusion

In this instance the positive benefits materially outweigh the negative impacts and the proposal readily complies with policy SD2 of the SDLP.