

Land East of Barn at Lowside, Yarker Lane, Mickleton, DL12 0LS Change of use of land and erection of stables for donkeys, with associated hardstanding

Design & Access Statement and Existing Photos

The Proposal

The Applicant, Mr Goulden, wishes to realise a long-held ambition to own and look after his own small donkey sanctuary - for 2, possibly 3 donkeys - and to run it purely as a hobby (rather than as any type of commercial enterprise). Having previously worked as a volunteer for several years at Wetheriggs Animal Rescue and Conservation Centre before its recent and unfortunate enforced closure due to bird flu, the recent coming to market of this particular parcel of land now represents the perfect opportunity for him to consider embarking on his own small animal welfare project.

This Planning Application is for a Change of Use from agricultural land to equestrian use, and for the erection of a modest timber framed stable building with associated external hardstanding.

The Site

The site consists of 2.45 acres (0.99 hectares) of fertile grazing land situated to the east of the barn at Lowside and accessed off Yarker Lane, Mickleton. It lies on the edge of the old floodplain of the River Tees, in open countryside which is designated as an Area of Higher Landscape Value.

The land is arbitrarily split by a post and rail fence into two fields. The "upper" field has a direct private gated access off Yarker Lane and is naturally contoured up and over a shallow "raise" before gently sloping down towards the central dividing fence. The lower field is more or less flat and is accessed via the upper field.

Design Statement

This Application has hopefully taken on board the feedback received from a Full Pre-Application Advice Report received recently (in February 24 - **PREAPP/23/02845**). It also reflects additional relevant comments made by DCC following another previous but recent Pre-Application enquiry and/or Prior Notice Application (**DCC Ref DM/23/01113/PNA**) - made presumably by the previous owner of the land - and which was subsequently withdrawn.

In summary the Advice Report from PREAPP/23/02845 advises that "whilst the proposals could be supported in principle there are a number of areas where the scheme requires further consideration before full support could be given". The information contained across this Full Planning Application package intends to provide and demonstrate that "further consideration".

The report goes on to state that any "future application will need to demonstrate full compliance with Policy 13, particularly around the screening of development on site. It is advised that plans detail appropriate screen planting in accordance with advice from Landscape colleagues. In addition details of waste storage, management, end disposal and surface/ground water will need to be

provided together with clarification that it would meet the British Horse Standards" relating to size of stables and the number of horses (donkeys) to be kept per hectare of land.

It is therefore fully acknowledged that the carefully considered siting of the proposed stable block, together with an appropriate screening methodology which is fully sympathetic and sensitive to the topography and landscape is fundamental to this development proposal, as is satisfying the other environmental and biodiversity criteria raised above.

Stable Block Siting

It is proposed to erect a 9.1m x 3.65m timber framed, timber clad "shed"-type stable block and associated area of hardstanding suitable for housing 2 or 3 donkeys in a location roughly in the centre of the plot of land (North to South) - ie adjacent to the existing post & rail fence dividing the upper and lower fields.

As shown by site plan drawing 4087/410A, the stable is proposed to be located a minimum 11m away from the adjacent large tree on the fence boundary and therefore outside its canopy & root zone. At the same time the stable still benefits from a significant degree of shelter and screening from the tree and surrounding bushes.

The stable block is deliberately orientated facing South East. In line with advice taken regarding donkey welfare best practice and also using local knowledge and experience, this enables the stable block to "have its back" to the prevailing wind blowing down the Dale. In addition, the stable is further sheltered by the substantial dry stone wall to the west edge of the upper field as well as the field's topography.

In terms of screening, the positioning of the stable block allows it to be substantially hidden from view from Yarker Lane by deliberately taking advantage of the slightly rising and falling topography in between. In order to illustrate this, drawing 4087/425A shows an indicative site section (existing and proposed) from Yarker Lane to the proposed stable location.

The principle for using the topography as partial screening was endorsed by feedback from the previous Pre-Application enquiry (DCC Ref DM/23/01113/PNA). However, in our considered opinion there is no need to go over onto the North side of the fence to achieve this; by visual examination of the site, there is ample space for the stable to be located to the South of, and adjacent to, the fence WITHOUT the need for any ground engineering or significant earth moving works (which neither the Applicant - for reasons of cost - or the Landscape Officer would necessarily appreciate).

Currently to the North of the fence in the vicinity of the proposed stable block is a small area of historic soil and rock spoil which is sparsely self-seeded with small trees and bushes. It is proposed to further plant this area and extend it informally with native tree and hedge species to provide additional visual screening of the stable block from the North and North West - see proposed site for details.

Stable Block Design

The stable block is to be assembled on site from three partially prefabricated timber framed units - two "loose boxes" (3.65m x 3.65m each) and an additional tack room (1.8m x 3.65m). The two loose boxes would be erected without installing a central dividing wall so that the donkeys are all housed together in an open plan stable. The building is built off a new concrete hardstanding.

The British Horse Society's guidance specifically for the welfare and care of donkeys defers to, and gives links to, The Donkey Sanctuary's website for advice and recommendations. A pdf copy of The Donkey Sanctuary's guidance is included for information with this Application.

The Donkey Sanctuary recommends that each donkey has a minimum of 50 sq.ft (4.7 sq.m) of stabling provision (bedding space), and that if possible more space should be allocated to allow the donkeys to move around easily should they need to remain indoors for an extended period of time due to the weather. The proposed stable provision allows three donkeys to do this with ease.

The shed is proposed to be minimum head height at eaves ("approx." 2.1 m) with a shallow dual pitched felt-lined roof.

There would be 2 no. wooden stable doors to donkey size specifications (tack room door to match). The two stable doors would be usually left partially or fully open at all times except in the most inclement weather. No insulation is required to the building.

A new running water connection would be made to a supply pipe already laid to the left side of the upper field.

The financial and practical viability of a permanent electricity connection to the stable is to be investigated. Operational power requirement is minimal, and in terms of lighting it would consist only of one internal light in each of the stable and tack rooms, plus one external wall mounted light on a timer switch. In the absence of electricity, torch light is adequate for tending to the limited daily needs of the donkeys.

A concrete hardstanding of approximately the same area as the building is proposed in front of the building, with a simple steel post and rail fence (with access gate) surrounding this enclosure. The specification of the hardstanding is a welfare issue for the donkeys and cannot just be soft ground or mulch.

Given the low-lying location of the stable block, a land drain may be required to be dug around the perimeter of the proposed hardstanding and leading to a small gravel soakaway adjacent and to north of the building. Once installed however there would be no permanent visual impact. No guttering is intended for the stable itself.

A small area retained by low level timber sleepers (or similar) is allocated at the back of the stable for temporary storage of manure after "mucking out". Periodically this would be collected and spread on the fields. Levels of waste are easily manageable given the number of animals concerned. Any man-made used materials or waste will be stored in the tack room and removed from site by the Applicant periodically.

Access & Highways Issues

The site benefits from its own existing private gated access off Yarker Lane. The entrance gates are over 7m wide and are set back more than 5m from the public road itself. The entrance area is roughly "hard-cored".

No changes to access arrangements are required.

No additional hard-core or track laying within the site is required.

Biodiversity

The existing fields are exclusively pastureland largely surrounded by dry stone walls with the odd tree and self-seeded bush or short hedge lining the perimeter.

A small area of pasture will be used for the erection of the stable; no trees or bushes are proposed to be removed.

To help screen the new stable block a small area of additional native tree and shrub species are proposed to be planted to enhance and extend "cover" to the north and adjacent to the building.

The proposal to use the pasture for low intensity grazing by just 2 or 3 donkeys may mean that in the future an ad-hoc wild flower meadow may re-establish in some form.

This proposal has no net loss of biodiversity. It has some marginal net biodiversity gain in the form of limited additional tree/shrub planting, and potential significant biodiversity net gain depending on future grazing regime.

Sundry Information - Grazing Provision

The Government Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and their Hybrids recommends that each donkey should have between 0.2 ha and 0.4 ha of land to be grazed year round without supplementary feeding. The land that forms this proposal is 0.99 ha and is fertile grassland, and so would support 2/3 donkeys perfectly. A small amount of supplementary feeding would be normal and expected occasionally depending on the weather.

Far North Studio 160324

Existing Site Photos









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