



PLANNING BY DESIGN

FROM CONCEPT TO COMPLETION

Design and Access Statement:

3 Stobb Hill, Gainford, Darlington,

County Durham,

DL2 3EP

Horse Riding Arena

On Behalf of

Malcom Todd & Susan Todd

Drafted by **Planning By Design**

Date: 11 March 2024

1. Application

Planning By Design (The agent) has been instructed to act on behalf of Malcolm and Susan Todd (the applicants) to submit a planning application to Durham County Council (the Local Planning Authority) for a Horse Riding Arena at: 3 Stobb Hill, Gainford, Darlington, County Durham, DL2 3EP (the site).

In support of this application, the following Design and Access Statement has been constructed to demonstrate the suitability of this site for this proposal and evaluate its accordance with national and local planning policy along with supplementary design guidance.

2. Site Location

The application site comprises land to the east of 3 Stobb Hill.

The development site is located just outside both the conservation area boundary and the limits to development for Gainford as defined within the County Durham Local Plan 2020, however, the host dwelling(No 3) is within.

The Site is located within an Area of High Landscape Value. The development site is bounded to the south and west by residential properties. To the north and east is open land.

3. The Proposal

The proposed development is for a new horse riding arena, measuring 55m by 25m, comprising a surface of stone, sand, and arena topping and surrounded by a new fence to match the existing.

4. Planning History

- DM/16/01897/FPA, change of use of land to mixed equestrian and agricultural use, relocation of a garden shed/summer house, formation of hardstanding, relocation of lighting column, solar panels to existing stable building, erection of agricultural storage building, and cladding of feed storage container (part retrospective), granted on 23 Sep 2016.

5. Planning Policy

The following planning policy and guidance documents are recognised as material considerations for the assessment of this application

- National Planning Policy Framework 2023;
- National Planning Practice Guidance;
- County Durham Local Plan 2020

The following section will evaluate the proposals in accordance with the relevant policies and supplementary design guidance of the Council to demonstrate why the proposal should be considered as acceptable in principle and in strict accordance with the Councils development criteria.

5.1. National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF)

The new National Planning Policy Framework was revised in 2023 and the following paragraphs are considered to be relevant.

Paragraph 38 confirms that Local Planning Authorities should approach decisions on proposed developments in a positive and creative way. They should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

Paragraph 47 confirms that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the Development Plan, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. This paragraph also states that decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales, unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing.

Paragraph 54 advises that Local Planning Authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions.

Paragraph 55 advises that planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects. Conditions that are required to be discharged before development commences should be avoided.

Paragraph 124 highlights that Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:

- a) The identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;
- b) Local market conditions and viability;
- c) The availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;
- d) The desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and
- e) The importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning should aim to ensure that developments function effectively and contribute to the overall quality of an area. Development must respond to local character and history, reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials and should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and landscaping.

Paragraph 135 states that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

Development should:

- a) Function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) Be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) Be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

e) Optimise the potential of the Site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks;

f) Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

5.2. County Durham Local Plan 2020

Policy 1 Quantity of New Development states that in order to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future residents of County Durham and to deliver a thriving economy, the following levels of development are proposed up to 2035: b. a net minimum of 24,852 new homes of mixed type, size and tenure over the period 2016 to 2035 (1,308 new homes per year).

Policy 10 Development in the Countryside Development in the countryside will not be permitted unless allowed for by specific policies in the Plan, relevant policies within an adopted neighbourhood plan relating to the application site or where the proposal relates to one or more of the following exceptions: Economic Development, Development necessary to support:

- a) an existing agricultural or other existing rural land-based enterprise or associated farm diversification scheme, including the provision of new or the extension of existing building(s), structures or hard standings required for the functioning of the enterprise;
- b) the expansion of an existing business falling beyond the scope of a rural land based enterprise, where it can be clearly demonstrated that it is, or has the prospect of being, financially sound and will remain so;
- c) the establishment of a new agricultural or other rural land based enterprise which clearly demonstrates an essential and functional need for that specific location and where it can be clearly demonstrated that it has the prospect of being financially sound and will remain so; or
- d) the undertaking of non-commercial agricultural activity which is located within or directly adjoining the applicant's existing residential curtilage which is of a scale commensurate to the incidental enjoyment of that existing dwelling. In all instances the resulting development must be of a design, construction and scale which is suitable for and commensurate to the intended use.

In respect to (a), (b) and (c) any resulting building(s), other structure(s) and hard standing(s) must be well related to the associated farmstead or business premises unless a clear need to ensure the effective functioning of the business for an alternative location can be demonstrated by the applicant.

Policy 13 Equestrian Development Equestrian development will be considered an appropriate countryside use and will be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- a) stables are of an appropriate size, design and construction for their intended use and the number of stables reflect the amount of grazing land available;
- b) the proposal involves the appropriate conversion of existing buildings or, where proposals involve new permanent buildings, these are located as part of, or close to, an existing farmstead or other building grouping;
- c) the proposal would not, by virtue of their siting, design, scale, materials or layout, lighting or through the inappropriate intensification of existing bridleways, routes and land, unacceptably affect the character, heritage or nature conservation value or the locality, either individually or cumulatively with other development;
- d) the proposals provide appropriate measures for screening buildings, hard standings, arenas and storage areas with trees or hedges;
- e) the proposal is supported by details of appropriate waste storage, management, end disposal and surface and ground water drainage;
- f) the proposal would not adversely impact on the general amenity of neighbouring properties and the wider area; and
- g) safe and suitable access can be achieved, and in the case of commercial establishments are located close to existing bridleways or other routes suitable for trekking or hacking out where this forms part of the business.

Policy 39 Landscape Proposals for new development will be permitted where they would not cause unacceptable harm to the character, quality or distinctiveness of the landscape, or to important features or views. Proposals will be expected to incorporate appropriate measures to mitigate adverse landscape and visual effects.

Development affecting Areas of Higher Landscape Value defined on Map H, will only be permitted where it conserves, and where appropriate enhances, the special qualities of the landscape, unless the benefits of development in that location clearly outweigh the harm. Development proposals should have regard to the County Durham Landscape Character Assessment and County Durham Landscape Strategy and contribute, where possible, to the conservation or enhancement of the local landscape.

Policy 29 Sustainable Design states that all development proposals will be required to achieve well designed buildings and places having regard to supplementary planning documents and other local guidance documents where relevant, and:

- a) contribute positively to an area's character, identity, heritage significance, townscape and landscape features, helping to create and reinforce locally distinctive and sustainable communities;
- b) create buildings and spaces that are adaptable to changing social, technological, economic and environmental conditions and include appropriate and proportionate measures to reduce vulnerability, increase resilience and ensure public safety and security;
- c) minimise greenhouse gas emissions, by seeking to achieve zero carbon buildings and providing renewable and low carbon energy generation, and include connections to an existing or approved district energy scheme where viable opportunities exist. Where connection to the gas network is not viable, development should utilise renewable and low carbon technologies as the main heating source;
- d) minimise the use of non-renewable and unsustainable resources, including energy, water and materials, during both construction and use by encouraging waste reduction and appropriate reuse and recycling of materials, including appropriate storage space and segregation facilities for recyclable and non-recyclable waste and prioritising the use of local materials;

Policy 31 Amenity and Pollution states that development will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that there will be no unacceptable impact, either individually or cumulatively, on health, living or working conditions or the natural environment and that can be integrated effectively with any existing business and community facilities. The proposal will also need to demonstrate that future occupiers of the proposed development will have acceptable living and/or working conditions. Proposals which will have an unacceptable impact such as through overlooking, visual intrusion, visual dominance or loss of light, noise or privacy will not be permitted unless satisfactory mitigation measures can be demonstrated whilst ensuring that any existing business and/or community facilities do not have any unreasonable restrictions placed upon them as a result.

6. Assessment

Principle of development

The majority of the site lies outwith the development limits for Gainford as defined by the Local Plan and as such is located within the open countryside.

Policy 13 of the Local Plan Equestrian Development Equestrian states that development is considered an appropriate countryside use subject to criteria being met. These are addressed below. The site also lies within an Area of Landscape Value as identified by Policy 39 of the

Local Plan, which seeks to further protect the special character, quality or distinctiveness of the landscape, or to important features or views.

The proposal will provide for equestrian facilities for private recreational use. Such uses located within the open countryside are considered acceptable in principle.

Character and Appearance

In line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023, particularly Paragraphs 124 and 135, and County Durham Local Plan Policy 39, the development should both respect and enhance existing character and setting. The proposal for a new fence that replicates an existing boundary treatment will ensure the arena is well integrated within the established landscape framework. Fencing is a characteristic typical in rural and equestrian settings, and its incorporation will not introduce a new feature to the area, but rather it will continue the vernacular of necessary and functional boundary delineations.

The proposed surfacing of the arena comprises materials rooted in rural design and reflects the utilitarian aspect of countryside management and equestrian facilities. The careful selection of surface materials is consistent with the character of the rural landscape, ensuring that the arena is not only functional for its intended use but is compatible with the countryside surroundings.

The topography and existing vegetation play a crucial role in the visual assimilation of the development. From public vantage points, the site benefits from natural screening provided by the landscape's contours and the existing landscape buffers, which includes mature trees and hedgerows. The proposal therefore maintains the quality of the surrounding views, upholding the surrounding landscape and visual characteristics and the conservation area's qualities.

The design's attention to mitigating the visual impact is evident, aligning with Policy 29 of the County Durham Local Plan 2020, which advocates for development that contributes positively to local identity and landscape features. The minimalistic approach to the appearance of the arena underlines the commitment to preserving the landscape's character.

In conclusion, the proposal for the horse riding arena is considered to be preserve the rural character and appearance of the surrounding landscape. The proposed fencing reflects the utilitarian rural aesthetic, while the choice of surface materials and the strategic screening of the development from public views combine to mitigate any potential visual impacts. This approach ensures that the development does not detract from the scenic quality of the landscape or the adjoining conservation area, thereby satisfying both national and local

planning policy requirements for developments of this nature. The considered design serves not only the functional needs of the equestrian facility but also demonstrates sensitivity to the site's character and appearance, substantiating the acceptability of the proposal.

The proposal is in accordance with policies 6 and 29 of the Local Plan and the design policies on the NPPF.

Residential amenity

The main environmental issues to be considered as part of this application relates to the management of the horse manure and general noise and odour generated from the activities which take place on-site and its proximity to neighbouring residential properties.

A condition requiring the management of waste to take place in accordance with the management plan can be placed upon approval. This would ensure the manure on the site would not lead to a detrimental impact upon neighbouring properties.

The proposed equestrian use is of a small personal scale and is not considered to significantly exceed noise levels on site to such a degree as to warrant the refusal of the application.

The proposal is in accordance with Policy 31 of the Local Plan, the SPD, and the policies on the NPPF.

7. Conclusion

For the above reasons, we see no reason for the Council to withhold our request for planning permission and kindly request that the Council make a reasonable decision on this submission in line with the developmental objectives and timescales of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Should the Planning Authority have any further questions in relation to this proposal or feel that certain conditions would be necessary to accommodate this proposal, Planning By Design would welcome conversation on any of these matters.