

Equestrian Design

PLANNING APPLICATION

**FOR THE CHANGE OF USE OF AN EXISTING
AGRICULTURAL BARN TO PART EQUESTRIAN /
PART AGRICULTURAL AND THE PROVISION OF
A NEW 40m X 20m HORSE RIDING ARENA TO
LAND ADJACENT TO GOYT VIEW FARM, LOWER
HAGUE, NEW MILLS, HIGH PEAK, SK22 3AP.**

DESIGN AND ACCESS AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION STATEMENT

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Introduction:

Planning permission is sought to enable the ongoing use of an existing agricultural barn for mixed agricultural and equestrian use at Goyt View Farm. In addition, permission is also sought to introduce upon the land a 40m x 20m all weather horse riding arena (ménage).

The proposed facilities are to be used in conjunction with the applicant's existing use of the land for the grazing of their horses. The application is part retrospective in that to date use has already been made of the barn for the stabling of the applicant's horses.

The applicant and their family have been involved with horses for many years and personal circumstances, including a desire to support and further develop their personal equine interests, can be seen to give rise to a genuine need for the proposal. The proposed facilities are to be used only for the exercising and training of horses and operated purely on a personal as opposed to any commercial basis.

This statement is intended to provide the information required to support the determination of the proposal and ultimately seeks to demonstrate that it complies with Development Plan policies of relevance. It therefore supports the contention that the proposal constitutes sustainable development for which national planning policies, in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), make clear permission should be forthcoming for without delay.

Application Context:

The applicant purchased Goyt View Farm, including the house and adjacent land, with the sole intention of being able to provide their own equestrian facilities to satisfy their family's needs.

The applicant's family have been involved with and owned horses for many years. They currently own six horses, all of which are kept at the site and already stabled in the existing barn. All of the site upon which the facilities are proposed and upon which the horses are grazed is in the applicant's ownership.

The family's favoured equestrian disciplines, aside from pleasure riding, include show jumping, dressage, showing and eventing. Also, material is that they train their horses using various specific techniques.

Groundwork techniques

Groundwork begins on the ground and teaching the horse direction and cues, which then results in the direction or movement that the horse needs to

execute. This involves hours and hours of repetition, by both horse and trainer so that the horse ultimately understands what movement it needs to make for whatever your cue is. Groundwork also continues in the saddle for such things as leg pressure, whereby the horse learns to move or change direction in a particular way as a response to different leg movements on different parts of the horse's body (shoulder, in front of the girth, behind the girth, etc).

Lunging

Lunging is a very important 'tool' with working with the horses. It is used to help develop trust between the horse and rider/applicant with the horse asked to work at the end of a long line between it and the handler and to respond to the handler's commands and ultimately the handlers body language. Lunging within a ménage allows the applicant to work with the horse, in a confined space, without the horse feeling particularly restricted, allowing the horse to be able to hear the handler at all times, maintaining close contact and therefore being able to build the horse's confidence and abilities.

Dressage

This is usually carried out in a 40m x 20m ménage, for Novice and Elementary level competitions, although larger arenas (usually 60m x 30m) are used in all the other levels of competition. Dressage is judged on balance, rhythm, suppleness and the obedience of the horse and its harmony with the rider. Both horse and rider must be able to demonstrate various elements of walking, trotting and canter gaits, and the regularity of the respective gaits in circles of various standard diameters.

In pure dressage the training and competition levels are probably best described as: Preliminary, Novice, Elementary, Medium, Advanced Medium, Prix St George, Intermediaire I, Intermediaire II, and Grand Prix. The applicant currently competes locally at both preliminary and novice levels and trains to elementary level.

The size of the proposed ménage relates directly to the applicant's training needs with access to the proposed size critical in supporting their ability to sustain and continue improving their performance.

Showing

Ridden showing classes feature horses that are ridden on the flat (not jumped) and judged on manners, performance, movement, style and quality. Showing requires very similar skills to dressage and therefore the training

requirements are very similar. Members of the applicant's family have achieved reasonably high results in local showing competitions.

Show Jumping

In competition terms, this is usually where competitors ride in an arena or ménage over a course of between 12 and 15 show jumping fences (depending upon ability), of varying height, width, complexity and layout within an allotted time. Time faults are incurred for exceeding the time allowance and jumping faults are incurred for knockdowns or refusals (where a horse stops before jumping a fence).

Progression through the various levels of competition for show jumping requires time and dedication to practice and train for both the horse and rider including their ground work techniques. The ability to use a ménage (and level surface) would allow the applicant and family to train and practise more frequently, in a training environment which is like for like with a competition environment, and which ultimately therefore improves their standards enabling them to compete at higher levels.

Eventing

Eventing is effectively a triathlon of equestrian sports, where three different disciplines (dressage, cross country and show jumping) are combined in one competition, set out over one, two or three days. One of the applicant's children currently competes in British Eventing competitions. Access to a ménage for all year training is therefore essential to aid their continued development and competitiveness.

Existing Stabling

When the applicant acquired the house and land, the existing building was already in use for part equestrian part agricultural purposes. It was not however known at the point of acquisition that the stables did not benefit from planning permission. The stables are known to have been in use for more than ten years and consequently it is contended that they are therefore in probability lawful. This is material in that there is a likely fall-back position on this element of the proposal.

The decision to pursue permission rather than a lawful development certificate reflects that the applicant was in any event already applying for the ménage and there was a logic in taking a holistic approach to the facilities. This is positive from the point of the view of the local planning authority in that it presents an opportunity to impose controls should any be deemed necessary. The approach also reflects that whilst there is a confidence that the stables have been in place for in excess of

ten years, contact with the previous owner would be required to provide the requisite evidence to substantiate this. Photographs of the internal configuration and of the stables are appended. What these evidently demonstrate, as would a site visit, is that the stables can evidently be seen to have been in place for a significant period of time owing to the wear and tear of the materials employed and ageing.

Continued use of the stabling is critical to the welfare needs of the applicant's horses and the ongoing equestrian use of the site. Aside from providing shelter and warmth for the animals the building also provides vital safe and secure storage for the horses, bedding, feed and importantly tack.

Ménage Benefits

Whilst it is relatively common to see some of the above events such as show jumping competitions being carried out on grass, particularly at county shows and the like, grass arenas can get damaged very quickly and risk becoming unusable. Repeated and frequent training on a grassy area is therefore not a feasible option for the applicant. In contrast the use of the proposed level ménage would enable the correct training, relative to a range of disciplines, to take place throughout the year, in all weather conditions, on the correct competition surface.

In terms of all-weather use the ménage will also double as a turn out area for the horses in winter necessary owing to the heavy underlying clay. This results in the land becoming very wet and heavy in the winter which is neither good for the welfare of the horses nor pasture management and hence appearance of the land.

The land becoming very wet and muddy during winter periods has resulted in health implications for the applicant's horses. Mud rash is a continuous worry for the owners over the winter and has led to cases of lymphangitis resulting in veterinary attention, antibiotics and an inability to compete at certain events. This has been a cause for concern for the owners as this can be a very serious condition and in some cases can be fatal.

Like many horse owners the applicant and their family have fallen from a horse on a number of occasions. The chance of injury when falling from a horse on a suitable ménage surface is significantly reduced when compared to the risk of injury when falling from a horse on a grassed arena. In addition to responding to the applicant's training needs, the use of the ménage can also be seen to be advantageous from a safety perspective, for both horse and rider.

The adjacent highway (Lower Hague) has a speed limit of 40mph and consequently traffic travels at speeds at or around the speed limit which when considered with the road alignment this road is highly unsuitable, from a safety perspective, for hacking. This reflects the road alignments and the speed of traffic using them. The provision

of a ménage will therefore guarantee the horses can be exercised on a more informal basis in the depths of winter when doing so on the pasture is not appropriate but which would normally be mitigated by riding them on public roads.

Agricultural Activity

The applicants land ownership extends to approximately 22 acres, far more than that required for the grazing of their horses. This associated and sizeable land has been actively farmed for many years including for the growing of grass crops including hay and haylage as well as for the grazing of animals. The existing building on the site, which was approved in 1998 and constructed shortly after, was in direct response to this agricultural activity.

It was always the applicant's intentions to continue agricultural activities on the land alongside their equestrian interests ensuring productivity which in turn results in an economic output and a return on their acquisition investment. Agricultural activities on the land moving forward will be centred on the cultivation of grass on a sizeable and commercial scale (albeit contractors will be employed to cut and bale). In addition, the applicant already keeps a small flock of sheep on the land at various points of the year and also has goats permanently on site .

Continued use of the existing building on the site is required to service these agricultural activities. Specifically, storage provision is required for the agricultural plant and machinery associated with the agricultural needs and operations as well as storage areas for feed and for fertilizer. The appended photographs demonstrate such a use already occurs, including for the housing of a small tractor which is used on the land.

In addition to simply storage needs, access to the barn will also continue to be required for animal welfare purposes. With regards to the sheep which are kept on the land from time to time, access to covered and weatherproof space is required at various times throughout the year when specific animal welfare tasks dictate so. The amount of space required for this varies depending on what is being carried out and also upon the amount of space available. The existing mixed use of the barn can however be seen to afford adequate flexibility for these activities, with on occasion the loose boxes being utilised as ready-made pens.

Evidently the ongoing agricultural use of the barn does not require any additional planning consent with the above information provided as context to help demonstrate and evidence that there are genuinely ongoing agricultural activities and hence needs at the site.

Site Context:

Goyt View Farm is situated off Lower Hague, just outside the settlement boundary area of New Mills, in an area designated as Green Belt land. To the north of the site is the main highway linking New Mills with Marple and to the west of the site lies another highway, albeit a private access road to a small industrial mill. To the south of the site lies the aforementioned mill, with a wooded area between the application site and mill itself. Access to the field is by way of two well established and gated access points from the private road. The applicant's residential property lies to the east at the top of the field, from where the applicant can look down upon both the existing barn and also site of the proposed ménage.

The land is generally sloping in nature, from east to west and whilst suitable for grazing the sloping nature of the field does make it extremely difficult for effective training to take place. Whilst land immediately adjacent to the applicant's property (at the top of the field slope) is relatively flat this area is not large enough to provide a ménage of the size required, it is also immediately adjacent to neighbouring gardens and could also be easily seen from the surrounding area, all of which make it unsuitable for use as a ménage. This context exacerbates the need for a level ménage.

Finally of note is that the underlying geology at the site is one of heavy clay with a relatively shallow top soil covering. This results in the land becoming puddled and quickly unusable in wetter periods, with the already very wet summer and autumn posing a significant risk going into winter.

Photographs of various views of the proposed site are appended to this supporting information.

The Proposal: Design Principles

Siting

It is proposed to locate the exercise area as close to the existing stable building as practicable, where it will be partially screened from Lower Hague by the existing building and also from the tree belt that runs adjacent to Lower Hague itself. It is worth noting that in choosing the proposed position, the applicant has also had to take notice of an existing underground high pressure gas pipeline, the position of which has been indicated on the application drawings.

This location is that which is most practical from the applicant's perspective, being close to their own stables, and as such avoiding the need for any significant length of connecting access track. The proposed siting also helps to ensure that from a design perspective the proposal does not risk being isolated, being well grouped with the

existing equine facilities. Furthermore, the location also acts to ensure that the ménage will not result in any degree of disturbance for the nearest residential neighbours, being located far enough away from these to avoid doing so. Finally, the proposed siting also acts to ensure that the facility will be well screened from views from the road to the north, with, at best, only occasional glimpses able to be seen as traffic passes the junction with the private access road.

Appearance

The surface of the ménage will comprise of a sand and rubber mix, which is dark in colour in order to better blend into and integrate with the wider site. An example of the proposed finish is appended to this statement and a sample can be provided if necessary.

When not in use any training and exercise equipment can easily be accommodated in the applicant's existing stable building, which would negate the need for any such equipment to be left outside for prolonged periods. In this latter regard the applicant would willingly accept the imposition of a condition to secure such an arrangement if deemed necessary by the local planning authority.

Engineering Works

Engineering work in the form of cut and fill landscaping is required in order to provide a level surface due to the topography of the land. Consideration has been afforded to various alternatives, including retaining structures from concrete, stone gabions and timber retaining structures, but the preferred solution being from grass seeded earth slope, with the steepest angle being around 36 degrees.

It is proposed to reuse any surplus excavated material to raise low spots on other areas of the field. Where this occurs, the final layer will be from topsoil and will be sown with grass seed to maintain the appearance of the surrounding field. There is no proposal to, and this approach should not be confused with, the creation of any earth bunds elsewhere on the site.

Enclosure

It is proposed that the ménage would be enclosed by way of the erection of a timber post and rail fence, to the dimensions specified in the submitted drawings, stained in colour to match that of the existing fencing already in place to the field. This form of enclosure is relatively common in the immediate and wider surrounding area and countryside.

Lighting

There is no intention to install any kind of external lighting to the ménage. It is recognised that to do so would require a further and separate permission.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The site is not situated in a known flood risk area which is recognised by the Environment Agency's flood risk designation mapping. There is no known significant risk of flooding from any other source.

An adequate degree of drainage for the proposed ménage would be achieved through the use of two soakaways, as detailed in the submitted drawings, thereby negating the need to connect to any existing drainage network.

Access and Transport

There would be no need or requirement to alter the existing access arrangements into the site, nor would the provision of the proposed ménage increase the number, frequency or amount of traffic either into the farm or the field. To the contrary the proposal is likely to reduce vehicle movements as there will no longer be a requirement for the exercise and training of the horses to be carried out as frequently off site.

In terms of ensuring an appropriate and safe access between the stable yard and the proposed ménage, a short length of access track is proposed as indicated on the submitted drawings. This is necessary given underlying ground conditions to ensure that the all-weather facility can be accessed all year round which importantly includes access for maintenance purposes (generally by a quad or small tractor). The width of the proposed track can be seen to be entirely proportionate being just wide enough for a horse and rider to walk side by side simultaneously or by a quad or small tractor. Every effort has been made to site the proposed ménage as close as possible to the existing yard to minimise any required run of access track, but the presence of the high-pressure gas pipeline which runs underneath the site has resulted in the siting put forward.

The access track between the yard and ménage will be from stone hardcore on a suitable but shallow base, and therefore have a degree of permeability with regards to surface water.

Pasture Management

Visual inspections of the existing land show that it is generally in good condition. AS noted however the underlying clay can result in puddling and damage to the pasture

easily during wetter periods. The British Horse Society's guidelines indicate that approximately 1 acre per horse is required for grazing and so the amount of available grazing land, even having regard to that lost to accommodate the ménage, is considered more than sufficient to meet the needs of the animals and also the guidelines of the British Horse Society.

Trees and Hedgerows

A visual assessment of the existing hedging in the immediate area has been made and all appear to be in good condition. Recommendations have been made to situate the ménage in the position indicated so as not to adversely affect the hedges – being situated outside the respective root protection zones. The storage of any building materials during the construction process is also to be kept no closer to the trees and hedges than the extent of the proposed ménage fence line.

Ecology

The application site is not considered to be of any ecological value.

Conformity with the Development Plan:

The Development Plan for the locality currently comprises of those policies from the High Peak Local Plan, adopted in April of 2016. Assessment against the Local Plan Policies Map identifies that the application site is located within the Green Belt.

Policy EQ4 of the Local Plan states that:

“Within the Green Belt, planning permission will not be granted for development unless it is in accordance with national planning policy”.

Paragraph 89 of the Framework permits development in the Green Belt associated with, amongst other provisions:

“appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it”.

It is widely accepted that small-scale equestrian facilities represent appropriate development within the Green Belt, in principle at least, by way of constituting appropriate recreational facilities. This is reinforced by Local Plan Policy EQ3 which states that:

“Outside the settlement boundaries and sites allocated for development as defined on the Policies Map, including the Green Belt, the Council will seek to

ensure that new development is strictly controlled in order to protect the landscape's intrinsic character and distinctiveness, including the character, appearance and integrity of the historic and cultural environment and the setting of the Peak District National Park whilst also facilitating sustainable rural community needs, tourism and economic development”.

Policy EQ3 states that this will be achieved by many actions including:

“Supporting equestrian development where it does not have an adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the area”.

Finally of note is NPPF Paragraph 90 which states that other acceptable uses within the context of the Green Belt include “engineering operations”, with some case law indicating that the introduction of a ménage can in certain circumstances be tantamount to this.

The stables at the site can be seen to have utilised an existing building which is a widely established principle prior to considering the need for new or additional buildings. Consequently, coupled with their scale, it is contended that their ongoing use is entirely in accord with Green Belt Policy.

The proposed introduction of a ménage, even accounting for the engineering works, is tantamount in many regards to a change of use land and as such will ensure that the openness of the land is not compromised. For this same reasoning, and alongside the careful regard afforded to the siting and design of the area, it is contended that the proposal would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt nor individually or cumulatively detract from landscape character. In this latter regard consideration has been afforded to the Council’s Landscape Character SPD and the specific typology within which the site falls.

Ultimately it is contended that the proposal, both in principle and in all detailed regards, can be seen to comply with all development plan policies of relevance.

Summary:

In conclusion it is contended that the proposed ongoing use of the stables alongside agricultural use of the remainder of the building, as well as the introduction of a ménage, evidently complies with development plan policies of relevance. This reflects that the proposal responds proportionally to genuine needs, in doing so constituting appropriate development within the Green Belt which can importantly be sensitively located within the existing landscape without entailing any detrimental impact on its character, openness, wider amenity or biodiversity value. Given this and that no other adverse impacts are considered forthcoming, the proposal is

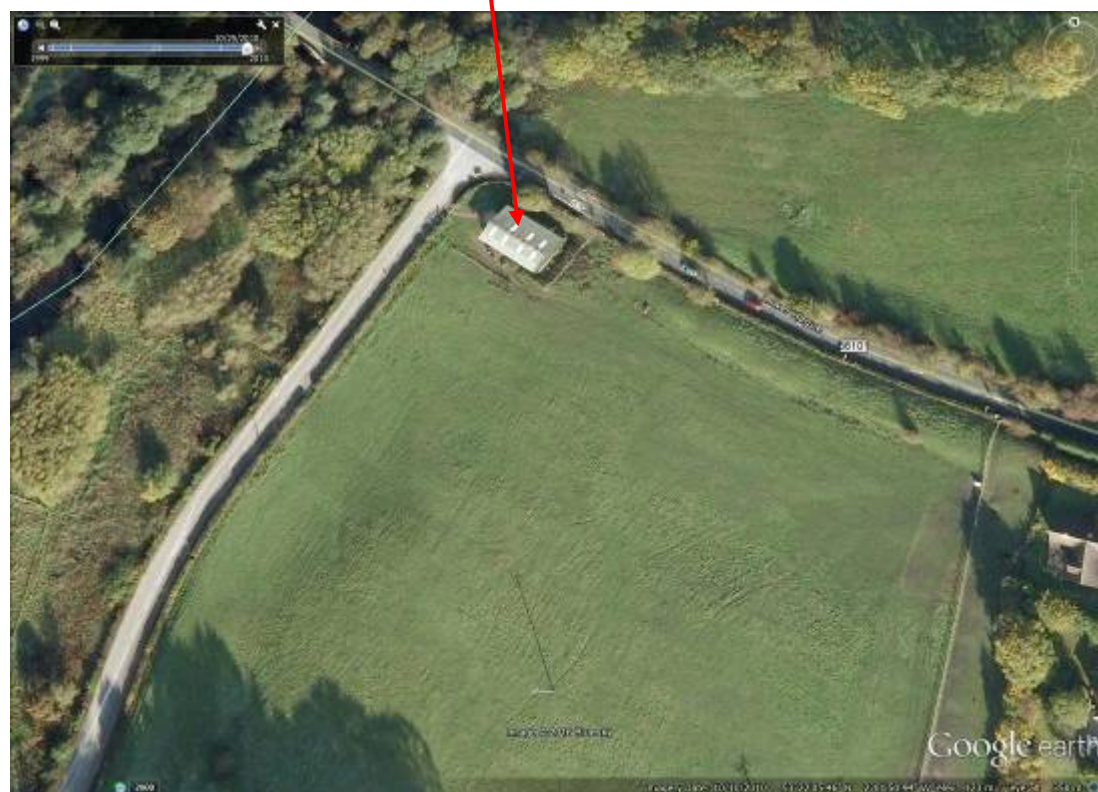
considered to wholly conform with the relevant provisions of the statutory development plan and as such should be regarded as sustainable development, for which the Framework makes clear planning permission should be forthcoming for without delay.

In the event the local planning authority do not concur with this view, the applicant looks forward to positively engaging with the authority to secure a solution, as is advocated by the Framework. In this regard the applicant considers the submission of this application as constituting the start of a positive dialogue with the local planning authority, and looks forward to any potential issues being communicated at the earliest possible opportunity.

APPENDIX 1 – General views of the site



Google Images of the site stables land ownership





Looking towards the stables from the north west (Lower Haque)



Looking towards the stables from the second gate



Looking towards the proposal site from the field



Looking towards the proposal site from the stables

APPENDIX 2 – General impression of retaining slope



Grass retaining slope

APPENDIX 3 – Proposed Ménage Surface Material



APPENDIX 4 – PHOTOGRAPHS OF INTERNAL CONFIGUARTION OF THE BARN





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