

Planning Application. Sarah Sheldon

To whom it may concern,

Re: Planning Application: Sarah Sheldon, Rivendell Farm, Woodseats Lane, Charlesworth. SK13 5DT

I am writing in support of the planning application for a horse-riding arena at the above premises. I provide the veterinary care for Mrs Sheldon and her family's ponies as well as being a horse rider and competitor myself.

There are many reasons why a horse-riding arena at Rivendell Farm would be essential for the Sheldon family. The three most important from my perspective are the veterinary health/welfare of the ponies, rider safety and rider competition ambitions.

Veterinary Health/Welfare

- 1) It is important to realise that Mrs Sheldon and her family have four ponies-a Connemara (DJ), a Welsh Section C pony (CWMHIR Spark), a Welsh Section A pony (Kali) and a mini Shetland pony (Miss Piggy, aka Rosie). Regular exercise in ponies is vital to maintain their health and fitness. It is particularly important in ponies who can suffer from metabolic issues and without consistent, daily, intense exercise they can gain weight and develop a severely debilitating and potentially fatal disease called laminitis. In fact, because of the lack of a suitable riding area, this has already happened to the Section A pony, Kali who has suffered from laminitis despite treatment for her underlying metabolic problems. Realistically, without a riding arena to allow intense exercise there is a strong likelihood that Kali will suffer from laminitis again and this may necessitate euthanasia.
- 2) Grass turnout for long periods can contribute to the risk of laminitis (as mentioned above). Therefore it is essential to have an area where ponies can "stretch their legs" without the continual exposure to grass paddocks.
- 3) A riding arena is important to allow ponies to be exercised in a safe area where the ground is consistent and not rutted or uneven which may lead to orthopaedic injuries.
- 4) In the winter especially, but with the extreme weather conditions we are experiencing as a result of global warming, severe downpours or very wet weather can produce very muddy grass paddocks which can be detrimental to the health of horses and ponies. Skin conditions and colic can be consequences of turnout in these conditions. Therefore an arena is important to help reduce the incidence of these.
- 5) Recently there have been increases in the recorded cases of atypical myopathy which is a potentially fatal disease caused by toxins from the ubiquitous sycamore tree. An arena provides a safe place to allow essential exercise without exposure to these toxins at certain times of year.
- 6) Regular exercise is important for all animals particularly in the winter time when turnout in fields is limited due to the wet weather we experience in the North-West of England.

Rider Safety

The alternative to riding in an arena is "hacking out". This involves exercising horses and ponies on roads and, ideally, bridleways. However, bridleways are limited and usually access to them involves some amount of "roadwork".

Unfortunately there are huge risks for horse-riders on roads despite the recent changes in the Highway Code. The British Horse Society published records of reported horse injuries for 2022 with 3552 incidents (almost 10 every day), 68 horses killed and 139 riders injured. These are worrying figures especially for a young girl riding on the road especially in the Charlesworth area which is an extremely busy thoroughfare for Manchester commuters. Certainly there are many more incidents experienced by horse-riders on roads than are reported and these figures are much higher; I can confirm this through personal experience.

The risks to rider (and horse/pony) demonstrate the importance of a riding arena.

Rider Competition Ambitions

Sarah's daughter, Sadie, is a member of British Dressage and actively participates in the camps, training and competitions throughout the year. Realistically without an arena there would be long periods of the year where riding in fields is impossible. Add to this dark nights which also prevent riding in unlit areas.

This year, 2023, she represented the North region in the youth inter-regional competition at Bury Farm Equestrian Centre and her ambition is to progress as an athlete through British Dressage with her ultimate short-term aim to be selected for the Youth Home Nation's Internationals in 2024.

Sadie needs to train and compete 4 to 5 times per week to continue her progression which is almost impossible without her own riding arena, particularly as her education is becoming busier as she gets older.

Sadie is also an active member of the local Pony Club in Glossop and she rode at the Pony Club Championships this year in the dressage to music. She regularly supports other members of the Pony Club and competes nationally against other Pony Clubs. Again, this level of competition requires an arena at home to maintain the standards required.

Summary

Having a riding arena at home is now a vital part of owning horses for all the above reasons and seamlessly blend into the countryside aesthetics. This one, in particular, will provide a local resident with the opportunity to compete nationally and even internationally which can only be good for the local profile.

If you have any further questions or would like to speak with me directly, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Simon Constable

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