

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

HPK/2025/0013
Valid 31/01/2025

WESTFIELD HOUSE HIGH
HILL ROAD
BIRCH VALE

PROPOSED 20M X 40M SAND
AND FIBRE ALL-WEATHER
OUTDOOR ARENA

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of the Development (Green Belt)
- Design, character and appearance
- Impact upon residential amenity
- Flood Risk

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site refers to a detached dwelling and its associated plot comprising an area of open green fields, located off High Hill Road located 500m to the west of the village of Thornsett. The application site is located outside of any defined settlement boundaries and is located within the Green Belt. The application site does lie partially within Flood Zones 1, 2, and 3.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks full planning permission for the construction of an outdoor horse riding arena / manege. The proposed arena would measure 40m in length and 20m in width. The arena would be delineated by treated timber posts and rail fencing.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

High Peak Local Plan 2016

S 1 Sustainable Development Principles
S 1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
EQ 3 Rural Development
EQ 4 Green Belt Development
EQ 5 Biodiversity
EQ 6 Design and Place Making
CF 6 Accessibility and Transport

Supplementary Planning Documents

Design Guide SPD
Landscape Character

National Planning Policy Framework

Chapter 2. Achieving sustainable development
Chapter 9. Promoting sustainable transport
Chapter 12. Achieving well-designed places
Chapter 13. Protecting green belt land
Chapter 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

HPK/2002/0872: Horse Stables (Approved 09/04/2003)

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 13/03/2025
Neighbour consultation period ends: 03/03/2025
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

No public comments received.

New Mills Town Council Comments

Does not object.

Environmental Health (No objection subject to Conditions)

The Environmental Health Department has no objection to the proposed development subject to the condition set out below being applied to any permission granted. This statement is contingent on all recommended conditions being adopted in any approval.

LG08 - ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING

No external lighting of the *development* hereby approved is permitted without the planning consent of the local planning authority.
Reason: In order to minimise the impacts upon *visual amenities /residential amenities/ pollution of the night sky* in accordance with High Peak Saved Local Plan Policies

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust

Further to our response dated 12th May 2025, a new red line boundary has been submitted, along with a BNG Report dated 5th June 2025 and a metric dated 29th August 2025. Sufficient information has now been provided to determine the application.

The plan shows two red line areas, one to encompass the arena and one to encompass the BNG enhancements. The enhancements comprise enhancing 0.30ha other neutral grassland in moderate condition to other neutral grassland in good condition, along with planting 10No. native trees. This will deliver a gain of 0.32 habitat units (10.39%). Watercourse units and hedgerow units are not required. This approach delivers the required net gains to be compliant with The Environment Act 2021. These details should be confirmed in the mandatory Gain Plan, post-development. The gains should be secured via a condition for a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP).

Our only concern is that the area of grassland to be enhanced is not defined by an existing boundary, therefore it should be considered how enhancement and management will be implemented going forward. It would be preferable to enhance the whole field, as there would be a set boundary to the enhancement area. This can be considered by the applicant and any amendments made upon submission of the Gain Plan and HMMP, post-determination.

We would reiterate our previous comments regarding lighting:

“The proposed arena is located between 14 m and 20 m from the River Sett. Our main concern regarding protected species would be the effects of any lighting to the River Corridor, which may be used by nocturnal and light-averse species including bats, badgers and otters. No lighting is proposed within this application, however our experience shows that floodlighting is often installed with such arenas and there is scope for a separate application for lighting at a later date. We would be concerned at the prospect of installing floodlighting in this location, close to the riparian corridor of the River Sett, and would suggest that any planning approval expressly prohibits the use of floodlighting in association with the arena. If lighting is essential, it would be worth discussing this with an ecologist and lighting designer at this stage to determine if an acceptable scheme could be designed and avoid problems later down the line”.

Derbyshire County council Highways (No objection)

Therefore, based on the analysis of the information submitted and a review of Local and National policy the Highway Authority concludes that there would not be an unacceptable impact on Highway Safety or a severe impact on congestion and offer no HA objections as there are no justifiable grounds on which an objection could be maintained.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The application seeks permission for an equestrian manege on a site that lies in the open countryside and in the Green Belt. The application is therefore subject to Local Plan (LP) Policies EQ3 and EQ4 and restrictive policies relating to the protection of the Green Belt contained under Chapter 13 of the NPPF.

EQ3 (rural development) seeks to control development outside the settlement boundaries and sites allocated for development, 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 tourist and visitor facilities in sustainable locations. All development shall be of a high quality design and protects or enhances landscape character and the setting of the National Park.

EQ4 Green Belt Development identifies that "The council will seek to protect the Green Belt and maintain its openness and permanence. Within the Green Belt, planning permission will not be granted for development unless it is in accordance with national planning policy."

Section 13 of the NPPF deals with protecting the Green Belt. New development in the green belt is deemed to be inappropriate, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved unless there are very special circumstances.

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF lists exceptions which are deemed to not constitute inappropriate development.

154. Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:

a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;

b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;

It can reasonably considered that a horse riding arena would indeed comprise an appropriate facility for outdoor recreation. Therefore the proposed development would accord with an exception identified under paragraph 154 of the NPPF and is judged to be acceptable in principle in this regard subject to the development preserving the openness of the Green Belt.

Policy EQ3 states that equestrian development will be supported "*where it does not have an adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the area*".

The proposed outdoor arena is to be located close to the existing onsite stables and other built form. The arena would consist of a relatively small parcel of land enclosed within typical timber fencing. The manege area would appear consistent with the existing character of the site particularly noting that there are stables already onsite. It is considered that the provision of the manege would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not result in any encroachment into the open countryside, or indeed would not conflict with any other purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Consequently, the proposed development is judged to accord with local plan policy EQ3 and EQ4 and national policy detailed under paragraph 154 in the NPPF.

Design

LP Policy EQ6 states that all development should be well designed to respect and contribute positively to the character, identity and context of High Peak's townscapes, having regard to matters of scale, height, density, layout, appearance and materials.

Paragraph 135 states amongst other things that decisions should ensure that developments will add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture; and are sympathetic to the surrounding built environment.

The proposed manege is of a typical size and would involve minimal engineering works given the relatively flat topography of the site. The manege would be well related to the stable blocks and supplementary buildings, minimising the landscape and visual impact. The manege would continue to have an open rural character that is compatible with the surrounding agricultural land.

The proposed manege would comprise a sand and fibre track surface blend which is commonly used for such arenas which is not judged to detract from the countryside location and would not result in any adverse visual harm. The use of traditional timber fencing is considered to help sustain the rural nature of the site and is a suitable choice for such an enclosure. Therefore it is deemed that the proposed development would utilise appropriate materials in accordance with local plan policy.

The proposed horse riding arena would be designed in such a way that it would be in keeping with the rural surrounding of the site and as a result would not appear out of keeping with the character of the surrounding area.

In summary, it is considered that the proposed manege is of a reasonable scale, sited in an appropriate location within the holding, which would relate well to existing development thereby not resulting in any harm to the character and appearance of the immediate and wider rural landscape, in accordance with Policies S1, EQ3 and EQ6 of the Local Plan and paragraph 135 of the NPPF.

Amenity

LP Policy EQ6 requires all new development to have a satisfactory relationship with existing land and buildings and protects the amenity of the area, which includes residential amenity of neighbouring properties. Aspects of residential amenity include impacts such as a loss of sunlight, overshadowing and overbearing impacts, loss of outlook, and loss of privacy.

The High Peak Residential Design Guide SPD requires extensions to preserve the residential amenity of neighbouring properties, having regard amongst other things to the relationship between existing and proposed development, the positioning of windows, and the change in land levels.

The use of equine activity and associated ancillary uses has been established on the site. The provision of a manege is proposed in order to improve the functionality of the space. Due to its relatively small scale and that the development would not lead to an intensification of the site by way of the number of horses or any commercial activity, it is considered that there would be no further harm to residential amenity than that which currently exists. The application is thus considered to be compliant with the aims and objectives of Policy EQ6 of the Local Plan and paragraph 135 of the NPPF.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity Net Gain Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, subject to some exceptions, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met ("the biodiversity gain condition"). This objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat. This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credit.

The applicant has submitted a BNG plan and metric. During the course of the application the red line has been amended to better secure the 10% net gain requirement onsite. The updated metric has been confirmed to create a 10.38% net gain over the baseline recording with watercourse and hedgerow units not being required, as confirmed by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT). DWT have stated that the required net gains as shown in the supporting BNG information be confirmed in the mandatory Gain plan, post development and that this can be secured via condition.

DWT have identified some concern that the area of grassland is not defined by any existing permanent boundary and therefore it should be considered how enhancement and enforcement will be implemented going forward. DWT have stated that it would be preferable to enhance the whole field as this would create a defined boundary to the enhancement area, this has been judged to be able to be addressed post determination via the Gain Plan and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP). An informative will be placed on any permission to this effect.

The application is therefore judged to comply with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) with regard to the mandatory requirement for development to achieve 10% biodiversity net gain and that any outstanding matters can reasonably be addressed via condition post determination.

DWT have also noted that the application site is between 14-20m from the river Sett. Consequently to ensure that the proposed development does not have any adverse impact upon protected species a condition is recommended to prohibit the use of floodlights. The application does not specifically propose any lighting however it is acknowledged that floodlighting is often installed to such arenas / manege areas.

Flood Risk

A Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted with this application. It identifies that the site lies partially within Flood Zone 2 (Medium Probability Flooding) and partially within Flood Zone 3 (High Probability Flooding) but there are no records of flooding at the site. It is not considered that the proposals would lead to any increase in surface run-off from the site or increase flood risk elsewhere. As such, the proposal complies with Policy EQ11. However, the FRA recommends that the applicant should comply with Appendix B which relates to flood evacuation zones and procedures, which can be secured by planning condition. .

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposed development has been comprehensively assessed and is judged to comprise a form of outdoor recreation and would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and is therefore acceptable in principle. The proposals are not judged to have any adverse impacts upon visual or residential amenity and comply with the mandatory requirements for biodiversity and ecology. The proposals are in accordance with the relevant policies of the High Peak Local Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents and the National Planning Policy Framework. Therefore the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Approve

Case Officer: Stuart Talbot

Recommendation Date: 22/09/2025

X *J. Colley*

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of High Peak Borough Council