

# PLANNING STATEMENT

**Planning application for the change of use of land for the siting of an outdoor riding arena 60m x 30m ancillary to the existing private equestrian use of the site**

**Ludham Farm, Cinder Hill Lane, Horsted Keynes, Haywards Heath,  
West Sussex RH17 7EG**



Prepared by:

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 A planning application is being submitted for an outdoor riding arena 60m x 30m on land at Ludham Farm, Cinder Hill Lane, Horsted Keynes, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH17 7EG on behalf of Ms Mary-Pat Sheridan.
- 1.2 The proposal is for a riding arena, ancillary to the existing private equestrian use of the site, for riding the family's horses.
- 1.3 A previous application for a riding arena, under reference of DM/24/3112, was validated in January 2025. The application included lighting on the arena, which raised a number of concerns from neighbours. The application has now been withdrawn and this revised application does not propose any form of lighting on the arena. The proposal also includes a native species hedge around the arena.
- 1.4 I am a rural planning consultant specialising in the equestrian development sector. I hold BSc Equine Welfare with Business Management, LLDP Law degree and PgC Agricultural Law. I advise the public and private sectors throughout the UK, preparing independent appraisals and attending appeal hearings and public inquiries. I have an in depth knowledge of the equine industry and equine welfare.
- 1.5 With formal academic qualifications in law, business management, equine science and behaviour, I act as expert witness in litigation and prepare expert reports for solicitors in relation to personal injury cases, disputes and veterinary negligence.

## **2.0 The Site**

- 2.1 Ludham Farm comprises the farmhouse as well as a number of old farm buildings, stables, a small riding arena and substantial area of hardstanding.

- 2.2 The site lies on the west of Cinder Hill Lane opposite the Horsted Keynes Industrial Estate and is within the High Weald AONB.
- 2.3 The site has a well-established use for the keeping of horses and comprises approximately 24 acres of land.
- 2.4 A public footpath runs close to the south boundary of the property, which will be close to the southern end of the arena. However, the public right of way will remain unaffected by the proposal.
- 2.5 As the paddocks are already fenced with post and rails, and post and tape, it is not considered that the appearance of the arena fencing will be significantly different to cause visual harm. However, a native species hedge will be planted alongside the fencing.
- 2.6 Location of proposed arena close to existing buildings, looking from the southern end of the proposed arena towards the north:



2.7 Fence line along which the arena will sit, along the northern side:



2.8 Fence line along which the long side of the arena will sit:



### **3.0 Planning History**

- 3.1 There is extensive planning history relating to Ludham Farm, in the ownership of the applicant since 2017, with the approval of conversion of a barn to a holiday let in 2022 being the most recent. However, the planning history relevant to the equestrian facilities is limited to three applications:

**08/01976/FUL** Replacement of existing stables, barns, outbuildings and open air sand school with new stable block linked to new covered sand school. Closure of two existing accesses from highway and formation of single new access to highway. – Approved 21<sup>st</sup> August 2008

**11/01556/EOT** Replacement of existing stables, barns, outbuildings and open air sand school with new stable block linked to new covered sand school. Closure of two existing accesses from highway and formation of single new access to highway. As per previously approved application 08/01976/FUL - Approved 13<sup>th</sup> July 2011

**DM/24/3112** Change of use of land for the siting of a riding arena 60m x 30m ancillary to the existing private equestrian use of the site – Withdrawn August 2026

- 3.2 The first application included the replacement of the existing stables, barns, outbuildings, and outdoor riding arena, with improved equestrian facilities and an indoor riding arena.
- 3.3 The application lapsed but a subsequent application renewed the permission. However, this also lapsed in July 2014.
- 3.4 The most recent application was for the arena as currently proposed, but with the addition of lighting on the arena.

## 4.0 Proposal

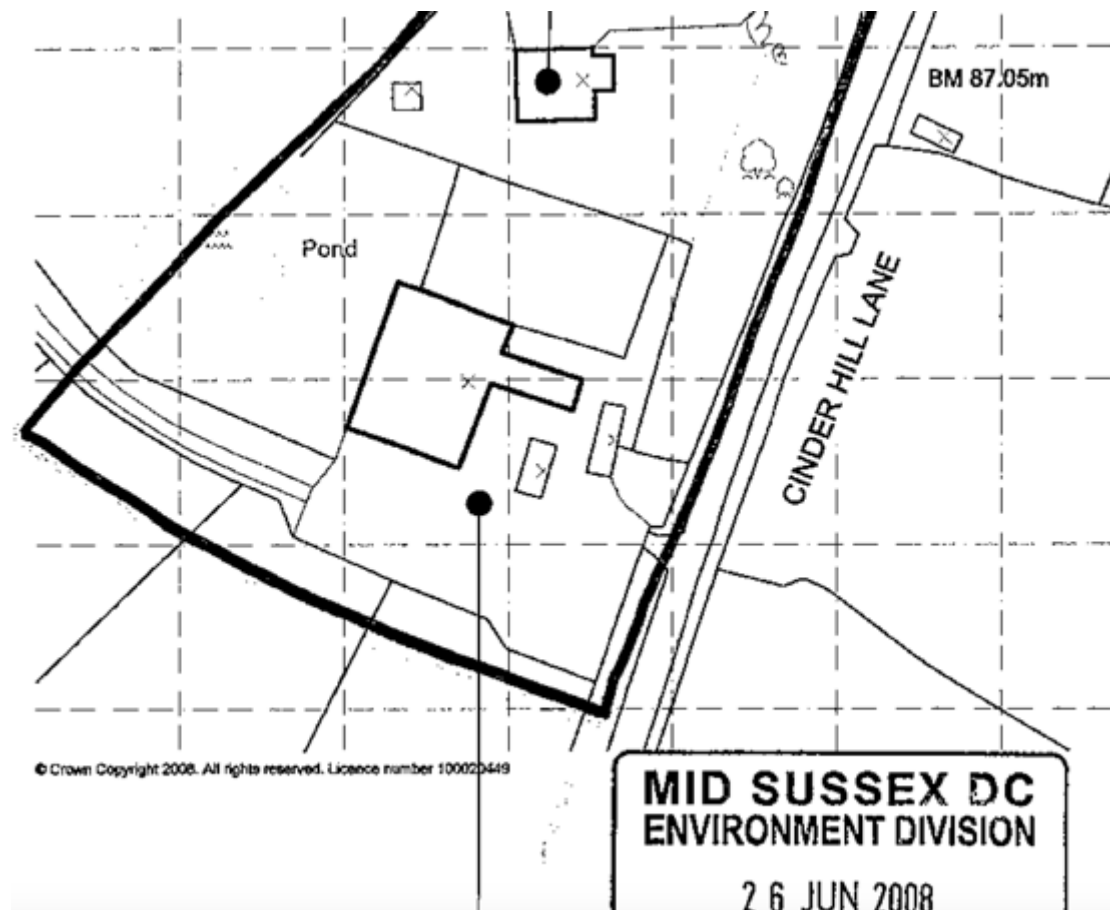
4.1 The current proposal comprises the following:

- Change of use of land for the siting of an outdoor riding arena measuring 60m x 30m. (*Cross section of arena is being submitted*)

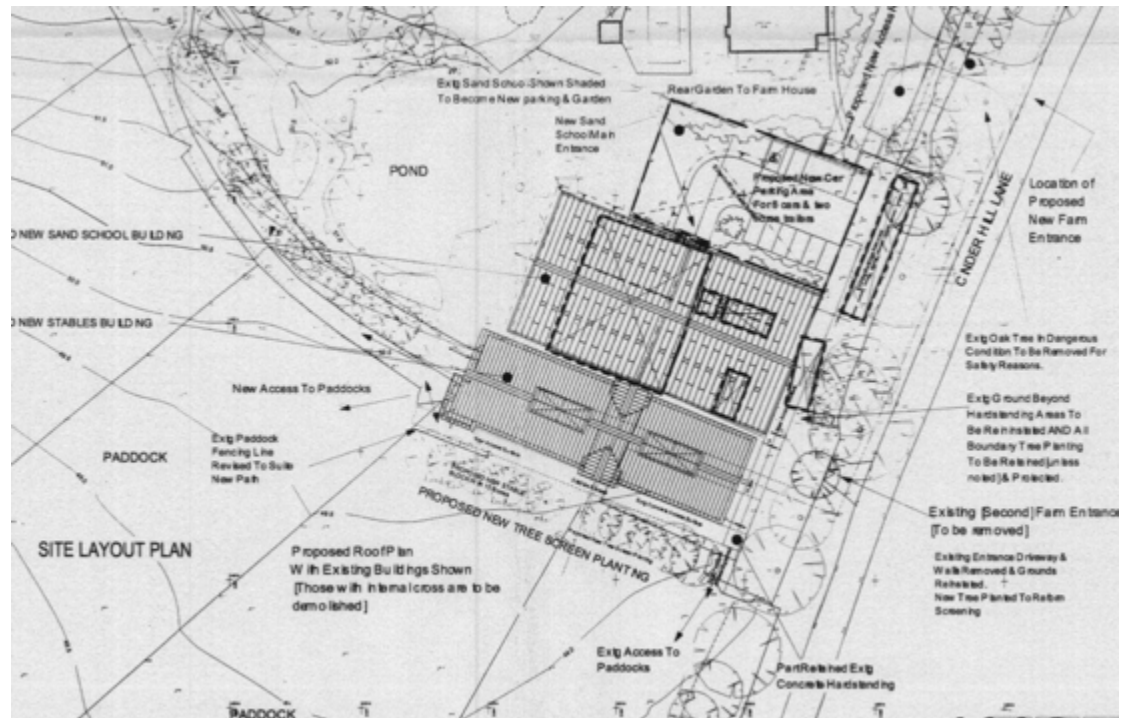
4.2 A small area of hardstanding between the gate and the arena is proposed. Some hardstanding already exists but needs to be improved to prevent mud build up etc.

4.3 The arena will be fenced with timber posts and rails. (*Cross section of fencing is being submitted*). Native hedging will be planted alongside the fencing.

4.4 The extensive proposals previously approved in 2008 and 2011 are not being submitted. This application relates only to a new outdoor riding arena. The plan below shows the 'red line' of the previously approved application, which includes the top of the now proposed arena.



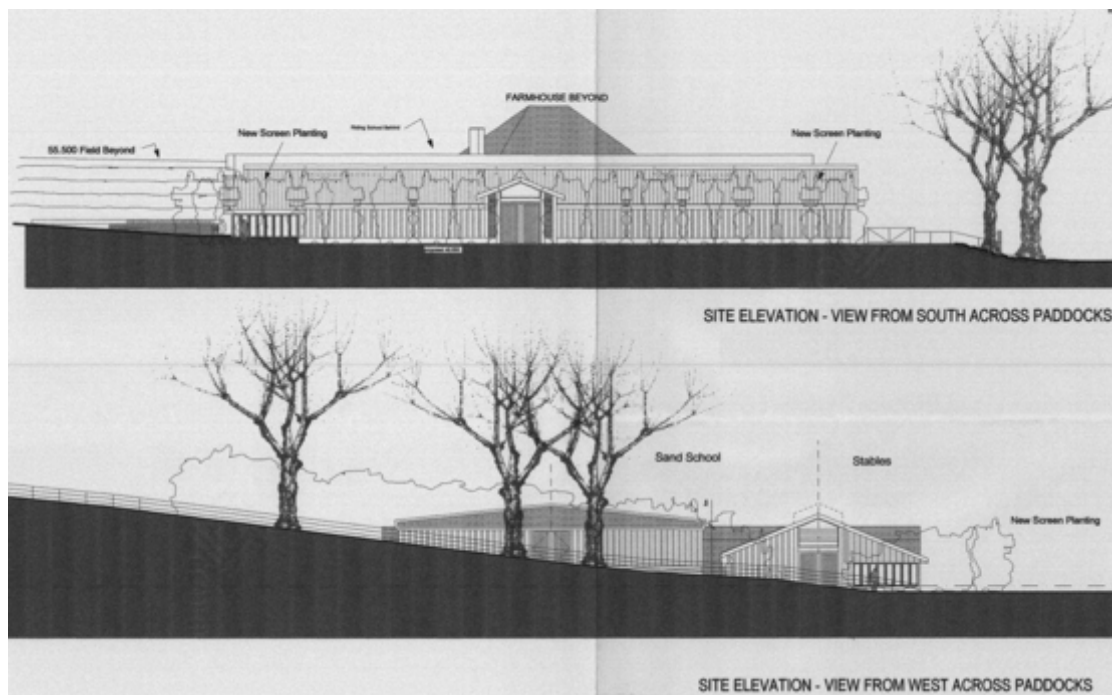
- 4.5 The plan below is the site plan of the previously approved application. This shows the position of the stable building immediately north of the proposed arena with the paddock boundary moved slightly to the south.



- 4.6 Due to the need of the arena to be 60m long, the only suitable position is just outside the existing yard area. However, it is as close to the existing equestrian facilities as it is possible to achieve, which ensures that the holding remains as compact as possible.
- 4.7 The position of the proposed arena is on land that is level, which necessitates the least groundworks. This means that should the arena no longer be needed in the future the land can be restored with relative ease.
- 4.8 A public footpath runs close to the south boundary of the property, which will be close to the southern end of the arena. However, the public right of way will remain unaffected by the proposal.
- 4.9 As the paddocks are already fenced with post and rails, and post and tape, it is not considered that the appearance of the arena fencing will be significantly

different to cause visual harm. In addition, it is proposed to plant a native species hedge around the arena.

- 4.10 The submitted elevations below, of the 2008 and 2011 approved applications, show the view from the public right of way. Seen in the context of these approvals, the arena will have minimal impact on the users of the public right of way.



- 4.11 It is worth noting that the arena is not a ‘built’ structure in the sense that it can be seen on the skyline, but merely a change of use of the land, which is capable of being reinstated.
- 4.12 Due to the height and density of the hedge along the eastern boundary of the applicant’s land, the site is very well-screened. In addition, it is proposed to plant a native species hedge around the arena. This will have the effect of reducing any visual impact as well as benefitting wildlife.
- 4.13 No trees or hedges will be removed or disturbed.
- 4.14 No changes to the existing access to the property are proposed.

- 4.15 There will be no increase in vehicle movements as a result of the arena. In fact, it is likely that the number of trips will be reduced as it will no longer be necessary to take the horses to off-site training facilities.
- 4.16 No lighting on the arena is proposed.
- 4.17 **Arena surface:** The proposed surface is silica sand and fibre, which is light in colour. This combination of riding surface materials is a popular choice nowadays due to its ability to address the limitations of other arena surface options.
- 4.18 It is much more resilient in all types of weather conditions, ensuring that the arena can continue to be ridden on throughout the year. It is durable to withstand professional training of horses, provides good footing, and cushioning to prevent concussion when jumping.
- 4.19 **Biodiversity and Ecology:** The application is exempt from BNG due to being under 0.2 hectares. However, the proposal includes the planting of a native species hedge alongside the fencing around the arena, which will provide a biodiversity net gain. The previous statutory consultee responses raised no ecological issues.

### **Ecology Responses:**

*Additional comments Place Services ecological Advice Service:*

*We note from the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (ROAVR Group, May 2024) that no buildings or trees onsite will be impacted by the works and we therefore agree that no further surveys for bats are required.*

*We support the Precautionary Method Statement for reptiles and mobile protected species (such as Hedgehog, which is a Priority species) in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (ROAVR Group, May 2024), which should be secured by a condition of any consent.*

*Please note that we have no comments on Great Crested Newt as we have been instructed to leave comments on this European Protected Species to the [NatureSpace Partnership](#).*

Jennie Shea Nature Space UK

*Thank you for consulting me on the above planning application. It is considered that the proposed development would present a low risk to great crested newts and/or their habitats. However, as the development is within the red Impact Risk Zone, as modelled by district licence mapping, I recommend that the following informative should be attached to planning consent:*

*“The applicant is reminded that, under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), it is an offence to (amongst other things): deliberately capture, disturb, injure, or kill great crested newts; damage or destroy a breeding or resting place; intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a resting or sheltering place. Planning permission for a development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation. Should great crested newts be found at any stage of the development works, then all works should cease, and a professional and/or suitably qualified and experienced ecologist (or Natural England) should be contacted for advice on any special precautions before continuing, including the need for a licence.”*

## **5.0 Planning Policy**

5.1 The relevant national and local policies in examining this application are set out below:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) August 2026
- Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031 March 2018

5.2 NPPF:

### *4. Achieving sustainable development*

*The objective of the policies in this chapter is to meet development needs through sustainable patterns of development, including by maximising the potential for growth on suitable land within settlements, enabling development which will support the rural economy, rural communities and the provision of infrastructure, and limiting development away from settlements to help safeguard the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.*

### ***S3: Presumption in favour of sustainable development***

*1. Decisions on development proposals should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means:*

*b. Outside settlements, policy S5 should be applied; and*

*c. In all locations, development proposals that accord with both an up-to-date development plan and the decision-making policies in this Framework should be approved without delay.*

### ***S5: Principle of development outside settlements***

*1. Only certain forms of development should be approved outside settlements, as set out in the following list. These should be approved, unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework:*

*a. Development for: agriculture, horticulture and forestry; outdoor sport and recreation; allotments; cemeteries and burial grounds; mineral extraction and processing; engineering operations and infrastructure (including for transport, energy, water and telecommunications); roadside facilities in accordance with policy TR5; national defence and security; or which is solely for nature conservation, restoration and/or enhancement;*

## **5.3 Mid Sussex District Plan 2018:**

### ***DP12 Protection and Enhancement of Countryside***

*Mid Sussex is a rural District, and the countryside is an asset that is highly valued by the Council and local residents and is recognised as having social value in enhancing the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors. The countryside is a working environment that needs to be managed in a way that enhances the attractiveness of the rural environment whilst enabling traditional rural activities to continue.*

*The primary objective of the District Plan with respect to the countryside is to secure its protection by minimising the amount of land taken for development and preventing development that does not need to be there. At the same time, it seeks to enhance the countryside, support the rural economy by accommodating well-designed, appropriate new forms of development and changes in land use where a countryside location is required and where it does not adversely affect the rural environment.*

**DP12:**

*Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; 11) To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination; and 15) To create places that encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations.*

**5.4 DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

*Small scale proposals which support the economy and social well-being of the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported.*

**5.5 DP24: Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Activities**

*The National Planning Policy Framework (section 8), recognises the important role that the planning system has in promoting healthy communities. A strategic objective of the Plan is to create places that encourage healthy lifestyles by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations. The District Council has adopted a Leisure and Cultural Strategy to increase participation in arts and culture, sport and physical activity of those living and working in the District.*

Also supports Objective 15:

*To create places that encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations.*

***Development that provides new and/or enhanced leisure and cultural activities and facilities, including allotments, in accordance with the strategic aims of the Leisure and Cultural Strategy for Mid Sussex will be supported.***

- 5.6 The proposal is an essential facility for the outdoor sport and recreation of the applicant and her family, ancillary to the residential use of the property.
- 5.7 The proposal, which is the minimum necessary to enable it to fulfil its purpose, is ancillary to the lawful equestrian use.
- 5.8 The arena, although just outside the built-up area, is substantially less than the proposal approved in 2008 and 2011.
- 5.9 The previously approved development included the indoor arena, which had a height of 6.8m to the ridge. In contrast, the exercise and training facility now proposed does not involve any 'built form'.
- 5.10 The Officer's Report 11/01556/EOT stated:

*In conclusion, whilst the replacement stable buildings and covered sand school are substantial in size, they are not considered to cause significant harm to the visual amenities of the locality and/or wider landscape or to the amenities of the nearby residents and other countryside users. The application is therefore considered to comply with the relevant criteria of Policies C1, C4 and R12 of the Mid Sussex Local Plan and can therefore be supported.*

- 5.11 The position of the arena is sited immediately adjacent to the equestrian facilities and is well-screened so that it is more sensitive to its surroundings than the previously approved indoor arena.

## **6.0 Justification for Proposed Facilities**

- 6.1 The applicant purchased the property in 2017. Since that time the property has been used for the family's recreational equestrian use.
- 6.2 The applicant's daughter rides competitively in affiliated British Eventing (BE) competitions. Eventing comprises three disciplines of dressage, cross-country and show jumping.
- 6.3 The existing riding arena is too small to be used for training, measuring just 19m x 30m. Typically, the smallest arena in which horses can be safely exercised is 20m x 40m.
- 6.4 However, the horses on site are large horses for competitive eventing, with the Warmblood being 16.3hh. The existing arena is far too small to exercise such large horses safely. Training specifically requires a larger arena. This means that training has to be undertaken at other yards with facilities for hire.
- 6.5 The dressage arena in competition is 60m x 20m. Accordingly, to train for competition, an arena must be at least 60m long.
- 6.6 In competition, the showjumping arena is very large. An arena of 30m width is the minimum that can enable a small course of fences to be jumped safely.
- 6.7 When training horses, an enclosed area with a suitable surface is essential.
- 6.8 For most horses, being in a confined area with fencing can encourage them to concentrate and they are less likely to be difficult. This provides a much safer environment for the rider than being in an open field.
- 6.9 The surface ensures that the horses' legs are less susceptible to damage caused by concussion than they would be if ridden in the field. This is because the ground is often too hard, particularly for jumping. Equally, if the ground is too soft, then tendons and ligaments can be strained.

- 6.10 Such injuries, besides being a welfare issue, can result in a horse not being ridden for weeks at a time. During this time, they become unfit, and a whole competition season can be lost.
- 6.11 In addition, if horses are trained in the paddock, the grassland can become damaged.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

- 7.1 The proposal is appropriate and proportionate to the lawful private equestrian use of the site, being ancillary to the enjoyment of the residential dwelling.
- 7.2 Due to the site being well-screened, and the particular siting of the arena, there will be no adverse impacts on the character of the landscape or nearby residents.
- 7.3 Due to the proposal to plant a native species hedge around the arena, there will be a biodiversity net gain.
- 7.4 Due to the strictly private recreational equestrian use of the site, the proposal will not result in an increase in traffic movements.
- 7.5 The proposal fully complies with the NPPF and Local Plan policies.