

Mid Sussex District Council

Our Ref: SDNP/25/03212/ADJAUT
Contact Officer: Nat Belderson
Tel. No.: 01730 814810

7th August 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

Neighbouring Authority Consultation

Applicant: Mid Sussex District Council

Proposal: SUPPLEMENTAL RESPONSE: Adjoining Authority Consultation - Mid Sussex District Council (DM/25/0090) - Change of Use of land to equestrian, erection of equestrian facilities including indoor arena, stables, outdoor arena, horse walker, re-surfacing of existing track, creation of balancing / ecology pond, associated earthworks and provision of a soft landscaping scheme. Amended Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Appendix received on 28.02.2025. Amended Landscape drawings and Ecology related information received on 30.05.2025.

Location: Land at Eastwood Farm , Shaves Wood Lane , Albourne , West Sussex

Although the application site is located outside of the National Park, the Council has a statutory duty to consider the Purposes of the National Park when making its determination.

The two statutory purposes of the SDNP designation are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage,
- To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of their areas.

If there is a conflict between these two purposes, conservation takes precedence. There is also a duty to foster the economic and social wellbeing of the local community in pursuit of these purposes.

Section 245 of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (S.245 duty) amends and strengthens the Section 11A (2) duty of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 upon relevant authorities, which includes the National Park Authority itself, to 'seek to further the specified purposes of Protected Landscapes'.

The National Park's comments on the development are as follows:

Further to our responses of 17 March 2025 and 30 June 2025, the SDNPA would like to take the opportunity to elaborate on our previous comments regarding the impact upon the landscape setting of the SDNP. In our previous response we have drawn attention to Para 189 of the NPPF and the need for development within the setting to "be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas". Policy DP18 of the adopted Mid Sussex Local Plan covers consideration of setting in more detail. Direct and indirect effects of this

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proposal upon the National Park and its setting are therefore a very important consideration hence our need to submit these supplemental comments.

The proposed facilities were previously included in a holistic pre-app and three inter-related points were raised at that stage. These three broad considerations remain relevant to this application:

Scale of the proposals

This is a significant scale of development which requires a considerable amount of change of this site to enable the development to fit. This suggests it has not been landscape-led and results in negative effects that have not or cannot be mitigated for.

Capacity of the site to receive the change

The definition of Capacity is set out in An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment - to inform spatial planning and land management (Natural England, 2019): 'Landscape capacity refers to the amount of specified development or change which a particular landscape and the associated visual resource is able to accommodate without undue negative effects on its character and qualities'.

The site's character will change as a result of the proposed development, from a pastoral field to an intensive equestrian development and wider use. The result is negative effects on its agricultural character and the qualities, including perceptual of this historic landscape. As a result its capacity would be exceeded.

In earlier advice we have advised that if the principle of the development were accepted, this should be concentrated on the site of the existing yard as this is where harm has already occurred, and so effects would be fewer and easier to mitigate. Re-use of existing buildings would also be beneficial in terms of sustainability.

Implications of the change in land use upon landscape character

Large-scale alterations in landform impose the development upon this sloping site - these changes cannot be mitigated for. Landform is a fundamental element of landscape and determines all other characteristics. The amount of landform change results in a highly engineered character accentuating the incongruous nature of the development upon this historic agricultural landscape.

The proposals are also within close proximity to ancient woodland. A track provides direct access to the ancient woodland.

The setting of the National Park and ancient woodland is currently a surviving historic pastoral field. This existing historic landscape would be lost through:

- Significant landform change, significant cut and fill needed to facilitate development. Knock-on effects on the natural drainage patterns of this site.
- Loss of grassland and pastoral character to equestrian buildings.

The applicants suggest that the new buildings would have an agricultural character, and this makes them acceptable in landscape terms. These are clearly designed as formal / status equestrian buildings with clock towers, formal planting and hard landscape that introduces a formality alien in rural agricultural landscapes. This mitigation measure is not considered to be successful.

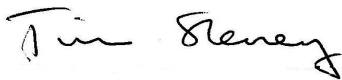
There would also be a loss of landscape coherence. When considering the National Park boundary, a key part of the Inspectors consideration was that these medieval field systems are coherent with the ancient woodland. The National Park and its setting in this location are part of the same landscape.

There would also be a detrimental effect upon tranquillity and Dark Night Skies (as set out in our response of 17th March). It is important to remember that dark skies designation and the perceptual qualities of tranquillity do not stop at the SDNP boundary.

In conclusion the scheme proposes a change the land use in the setting of the National Park, from agriculture to equestrian, this change is permanent. The implications of this upon the landscape and its perceptual qualities in the setting of the NP are considered to be significant. The proposals would therefore conflict with Para 189 of the NPPF and MSLP Policy DP18.

If, notwithstanding these concerns, permission is to be granted, we would recommend conditions to ensure positive, extensive (as opposed to intensive) land management of the wider holding to support conservation of wildlife, that the use of fencing to subdivide the land is controlled and that external lighting is also controlled via condition.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Slaney', with a stylized, cursive script.

TIM SLANEY
Director of Planning
South Downs National Park Authority

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