

THE RURAL PLANNING PRACTICE



Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement

In Support of a Full Application to convert
stables to one residential dwelling

ADDRESS Equestrian Yard, Kings Farmhouse, Balcombe

ON BEHALF OF Mr A Coveney

PREPARED BY The Rural Planning Practice

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Document formatted to print on A3 or be viewed on screen





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Aerial site plan



Stables to be converted



Yewtree farm

PROW

B2036 London Road

1. Introduction

1.1. This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by The Rural Planning Practice on behalf of the applicant, Mr A Coveney, in support of a full planning application for the following development at the Equestrian yard, Kings Farmhouse, London Road, Balcombe:

“Conversion of equestrian buildings to create single dwellinghouse, change of use of equestrian yard to create new residential curtilage.”

1.2. The site is not practical for equestrian use because of the lack of riding in the area, and the need to ride horses along a classified road. There are not enough loose boxes to be commercially viable.

1.3. The Statement is intended to provide an overview of the site and its surrounding context, the relevant planning history, a review of the applicable adopted development plan policies, the National Planning Policy Framework, and all other relevant material considerations. It also explains the design concepts and strategy that has informed the scheme.

1.4. In addition to this Statement, the application is supported by the following documents and plans.

- Existing plans and elevations
- Proposed plans and elevations
- A Transport Note
- A Structural Survey
- A Preliminary Ecological Assessment
- An Ecological Impact Assessment



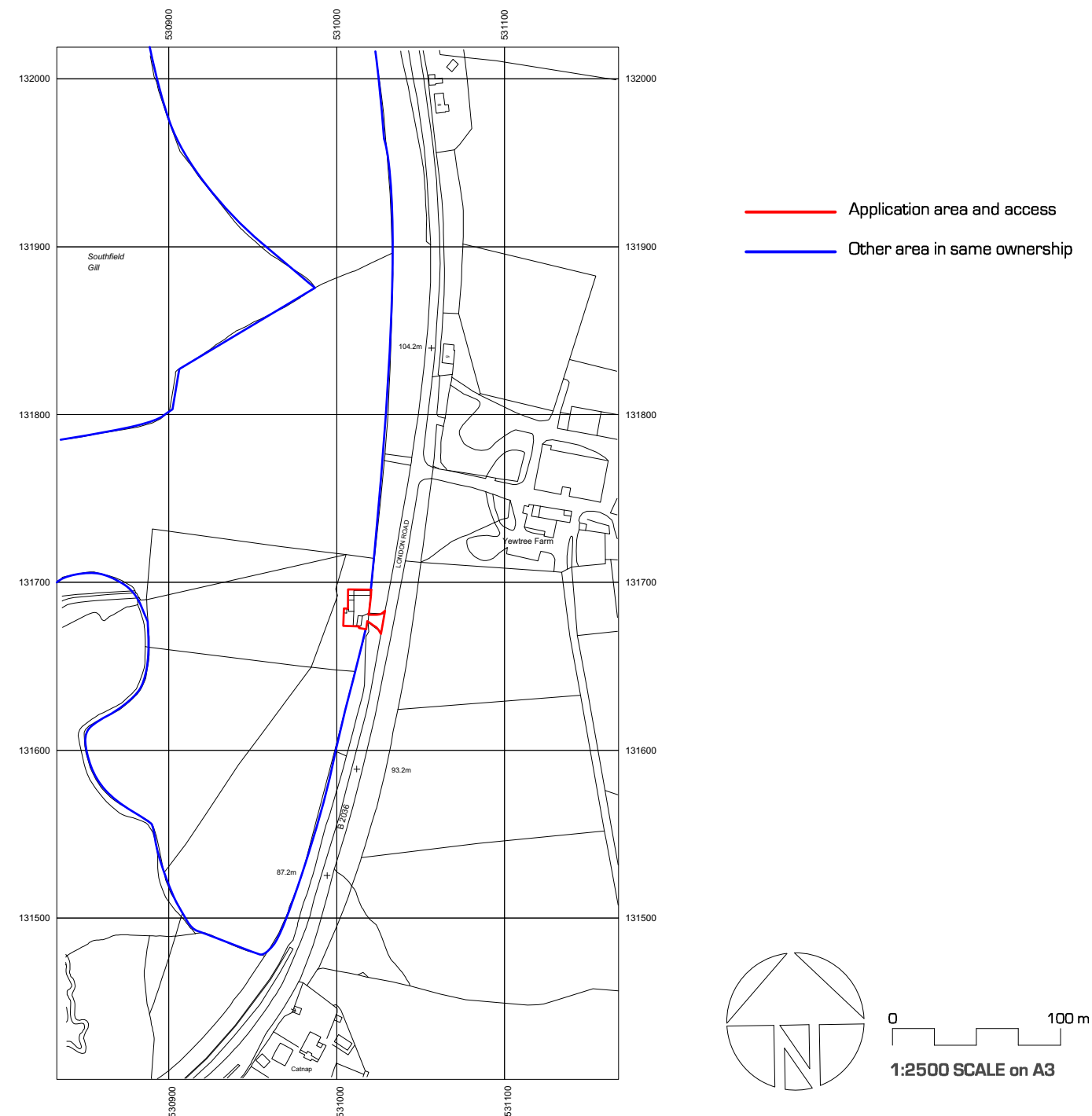
Stables to be converted





2. Site Context and Surroundings

- 2.1. The site covers an area of 317.5 sq.m. and lies to the west of the London Road (B2036), approximately 0.8 miles to the north of Balcombe village, within the High Weald AONB. The site is accessed from the London Road and currently comprises five loose boxes with ancillary storage in a 'L' shape, with a small area of grass. There is a caravan and a storage container currently on the site.



Location Plan (not shown to scale)

3. Proposed Development

- 3.1. The proposal is to convert the equestrian buildings and timber barn into one residential dwelling, retaining the existing access point from London Road. The proposal is to convert the stables into one single storey house with a GIA of 100.9 square metres. The property will provide three bedrooms, a lounge, a study, a kitchen and a bathroom and will meet the Government's Technical Space Standards.
- 3.2. The roof will be covered in clay roof tiles and zinc on the low pitched roof on the southern stable. There will be horizontal cladding feather edge oak and re-pointed stone plinths with lime pointing. The existing oak frame will be exposed. The mobile caravan and storage structures will be removed from the site. The proposed layout will accommodate 2 car parking spaces, within the courtyard.



Existing storage structure and caravan to be removed





4. Planning History

4.1. There is no relevant planning history on the site.

5. Development Plan and Material Considerations

Relevant Local Plan policies and National planning policies are set out below.

Mid Sussex District Plan (2014-2031)

- DP6 – settlement hierarchy
- DP12 – protection and enhancement of countryside
- DP15 – new homes in the countryside
- DP16 – High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- DP26 – character and design
- DP27 – dwelling space standards
- DP28 – accessibility
- DP34 – listed buildings and other heritage assets
- DP37 – trees, woodland and hedgerows
- DP38 – biodiversity
- DP39 – sustainable design and construction

Mid Sussex Local Plan (Saved Policies)

- C1 – development outside built-up boundaries
- C4 – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Balcombe Made Neighbourhood Plan (2016)

- Policy 3: Design

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- Paragraph 70 recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of sites LPAs should support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions
- Paragraph 84 states that planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and



enhance its immediate setting.

- Paragraph 109 makes clear that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.
- Paragraph 128 states that planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land.

5.1. Other documents:

- High Weald AONB Design Guide
- High Weald AONB Management Plan
- Balcombe Village Design Guide (2016)
- Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD (2020)
- West Sussex County Council Guidance on Parking at New Developments (September 2020)

6. Proposed Development - Compliance with the Development Plan

Principle of development

- 6.1. Adopted policy DP12 sets out that the countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or it is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.2. Policy DP15 goes on to state that the re-use and adaptation of rural buildings for residential use in the countryside will be permitted where it is not a recently constructed agricultural building which has not been or has been little used for its original purpose and:
 - the re-use would secure the future of a heritage asset; or
 - the re-use would lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting and the quality of the rural and landscape character of the area is maintained.
- 6.3. Saved local plan C1 sets out that proposals for development within the countryside will be resisted and restricted to (inter alia) proposals for new uses in rural buildings of a scale consistent with the building's location.
- 6.4. The Balcombe Design Guide notes that 'the presumption must be to re-use and extend the life of buildings rather than demolish and re-build.'
- 6.5. The scheme as proposed makes use of an existing rural building, which has been in situ for a significant period and has been used for its original purpose for that time. However, the use has recently ceased as the equestrian yard has re-located. The submitted plans clearly show that the

re-use would result in an enhancement of the immediate setting and the quality of the rural character of the area is enhanced.

- 6.6. The principle of development is confirmed in national policy, the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan.

Converting the building

- 6.7. A structural appraisal of the stable buildings was undertaken by Building and Structural Consulting Limited (October 2023) and is submitted in support of this planning application. The appraisal found that for conversion, an overhaul of the timber frames would be necessary, cutting out areas of rot and replacing with new timber. It would be necessary to provide adequate damp-proofing and insulation and foundations may need strengthening. The report concluded that the structures are capable of conversion with light restoration and adaptation to bring them up to current Building Regulations.

Location of development

- 6.8. The application site is not considered to be isolated in respect of the language at paragraph 84 of the NPPF and it cannot be reasonably argued to be so, given the physical proximity of other buildings. Yewtree Farm lies to the east of the site, and further to the south on London Road lie a number of residential buildings. As set out in paragraph 84, the proposed development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance the immediate setting.
- 6.9. Furthermore, the proximity to Balcombe and its range of services and amenities offers opportunities to cycle there with relative ease. Balcombe has a village store with a church, a post office, a public house, a pre-school, a day care nursery, a primary school, 3 village halls and many clubs and societies. The village has a main line railway station which provides access to London, Haywards Heath and Brighton. The site lies 1 mile from the train station.
- 6.10. Bus service 62 also connects Balcombe Station with Crawley to the North, and Cuckfield and Haywards Heath to the south.
- 6.11. This is an important and relevant consideration; it would be an altogether narrow approach to suggest that sites were locationally unsuitable just because occupiers could not easily walk to a fully stocked high street. To adopt such a view would



The northern and western elevations of the stables



Existing internal rafters

be to plainly misunderstand the requirements of paragraph 109 of the NPPF which makes clear that the appropriate opportunities available to promote sustainable transport modes will be dependent on the location of the development itself.

- 6.12. As such, it would be altogether unreasonable to adopt an approach where the scheme was resisted on locational grounds.

Impact on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 6.13. Policy DP16 states that development in the AONB will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan. The design of the proposed conversion of the stables has had regard to the High Weald Housing Design Guide (November 2019). Specifically, the proposed conversion of the building will be clad in clay roof tiles, and faced with locally sourced timber weatherboard cladding, and will be set in a landscaped setting. The proposed window frames will be powder coated aluminium.

Impact on designated heritage assets

- 6.14. The site does not lie in a Conservation Area and there are no heritage assets in the immediate vicinity of the site. The equestrian yard lies some 850m south of the Grade II listed Kings Farmhouse, and there is no direct intervisibility between the Farmhouse and the proposed development. The site does not therefore lie within the setting of the Farmhouse. As such, it is considered that the proposed development will have no direct or indirect impact on designated heritage assets.

Highways

- 6.15. A transport note has been prepared to support the planning application. It notes that the site can accommodate parking for two cars, and confirms the swept path analysis for a delivery vehicle to turn within the site. It notes that there will be a net reduction of 18 daily movements on a weekday from the existing to the proposed use. There are no highway safety concerns in relation to the site access over and above the existing situation.

- 6.16. In terms of reducing the need to travel or having more sustainable travel options, the Openreach website confirms



Grade II listed Kings Farmhouse, some 850m from the site



London Road adjacent to the site

that there is Full Fibre Broadband available in the area, which would be connected to the premises, enabling the occupant to work at home if required. There will be an active electrical vehicle charging point at the site, and the site could accommodate delivery vehicles such as supermarket vans.

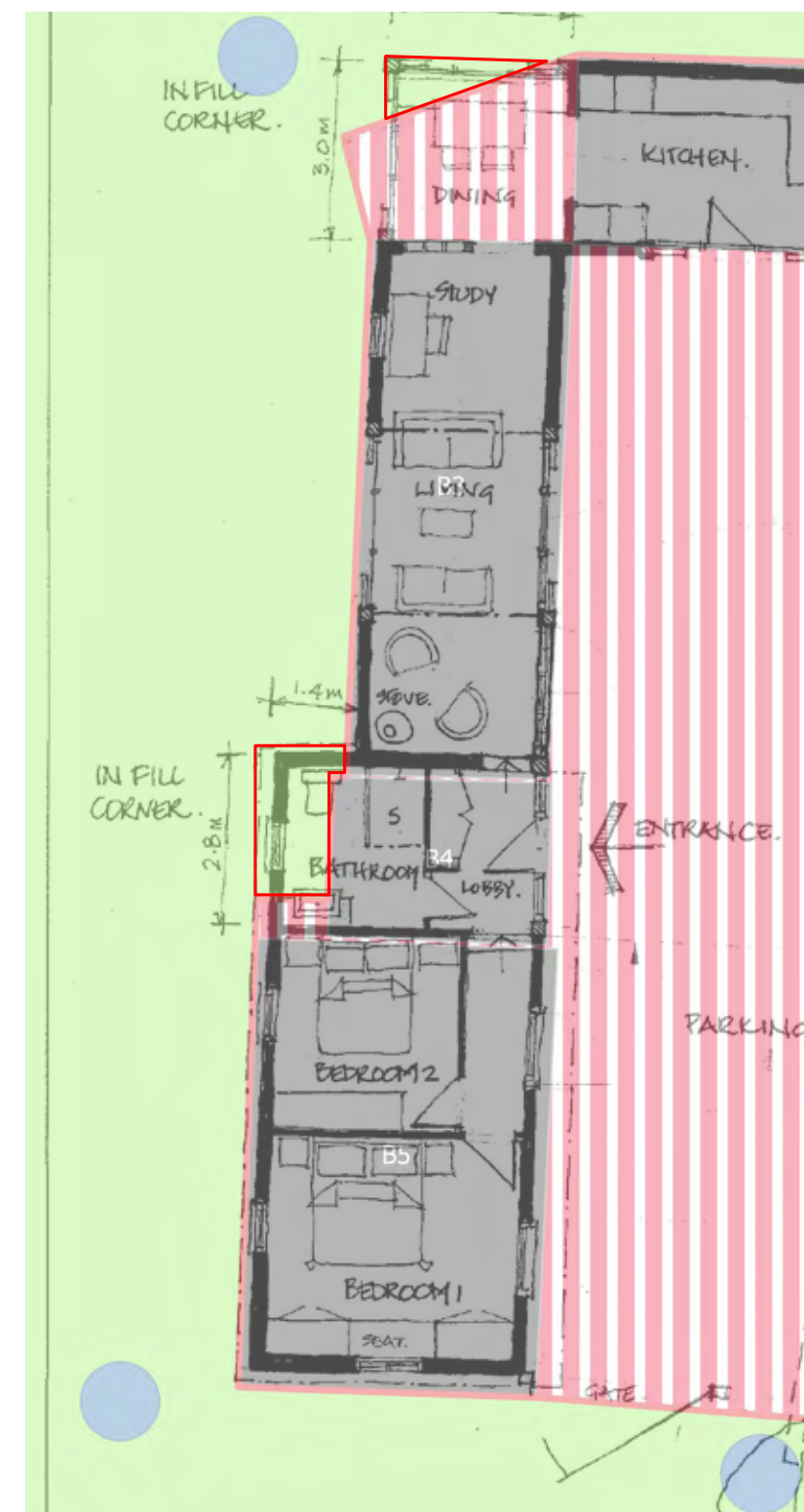
- 6.17. Rubbish bins would be placed at the entrance to the site on the collection day.

Design

- 6.18. The proposed development is for the conversion of the existing stables to a single storey building which reflects the site's history as an equestrian yard. This is reinforced by the use of traditional materials such as clay roof tiles for the pitched roofs, and zinc to the low pitched roof on the southern stable. There will be horizontal cladding feather edge oak and re-pointed stone plinths with lime pointing. The existing oak frame will be exposed. Windows and doors will be a mixture of double glazed in hardwood timber, and powder-coated aluminium in a thin frame. Gutting downpipes will be black, half round conservation style.

Ecology

- 6.19. A preliminary ecological appraisal of the site was undertaken in December 2023. The PEA concludes in paragraph 5.2.2 that: 'There is no priority or otherwise notable habitat on-site. The majority of the yard consists of hardstanding and buildings, while the surrounding grassland is considered to be of low ecological value. The only habitat feature of note is the roadside tree and scrub boundary.'
- 6.20. It is proposed that the roadside tree and scrub boundary will be retained as part of the proposed development; this area is excluded from the red line plan.
- 6.21. The PEA recommended that bat surveys be undertaken.
- 6.22. An Ecological Impact Assessment (EciA) has since been prepared and is submitted in support of this planning application. The EciA notes that the bat surveys which took place on 23rd July and 13th August 2024 found no evidence of bats emerging from the buildings on site. However, it noted bat commuting/foraging activity across the site.
- 6.23. In relation to Biodiversity Net gain, the EciA concluded that:



Plan showing the areas of grassland (outlined in red) amounting to 5 sq.m. which are proposed for development.



6.24. 'The development will not be subject to mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) legislation as the baseline score will be zero (or almost zero). This is because only the 'sealed surface' (hardstanding) will be impacted, with the surrounding vegetation remaining unimpacted. Therefore, as an uplift of 10% from a starting score of zero cannot be obtained, the development is exempt from BNG legislation in accordance with the advice given from the Planning Advisory Service.'

6.25. The only loss of grassland associated with the proposed development will be two small areas as shown on the adjacent plan. These together comprise an area of 5 sq m, and should therefore be considered 'de minimis' in terms of biodiversity net gain.

6.26. The EciA concluded that, as the site is not within or close to a statutory designated site for nature, the proposed development will not trigger a consultation on statutory designated sites. It also noted that there is no priority or otherwise notable habitat on site. It recommended that a sensitive lighting design be used and that native species planting takes place to help maintain the area's biodiversity value and the ecological integrity of the surrounding countryside.

Neighbouring amenity

6.27. In terms of noise, there are no existing residents in immediate proximity to the site who would be affected by construction noise from the proposed development.

Drainage

6.28. The site lies in Flood Zone 1, the area at lowest risk of fluvial flooding. It also lies in an area at very low risk of surface water flooding.

6.29. A package treatment plant will be installed at the southern end of the yard to manage foul drainage. This lies xxm from the proposed building and would be accessible to a vehicle to be emptied.

6.30. The footprint of the existing hardstanding is proposed to be decreased because the existing concrete surface of the yard would be replaced with a permeable gravel surface. Surface water would be managed through the provision of water butts and a soakaway into the field to the west.

Sustainability

6.31. The proposed dwelling would be built to exceed insulation standards required by Building Regulations. The building will be heated by an air source heat pump, (or ground source into the field to the west), with the plant room in the kitchen area. Double glazed windows will be installed, and water butts will collect rainwater.

Trees

6.32. There are no trees within the site. However, a number of large, mature oak trees line the boundary with the B2036 (London Road). These trees will be retained as part of the planning application and the proposed development will not impact on them.



7. Overall Conclusions

- 7.1. The proposed development complies with the full range of relevant national and development plan policies. It makes a small contribution to the District housing need, on a brownfield site which is no longer in use. The proposed design reflects the previous use of the buildings and is confined to the hardstanding and building footprint on the site.