

Planning Statement for the Erection of a Stable Block

This planning application seeks consent for the erection of a stable block on land east of Freshfiel Lane, grid reference 538498/125834. The proposal aims to support breeding activities and provide safe, functional housing for horses, while maintaining the character and appearance of the rural environment in Horsted Keynes. The “larger” farm size qualifies for permitted development rights under the relevant agricultural legislation. Having acquired much of the land east of Freshfiel Lane, I have completed fencing to create four grazing areas, the position of the stable is to the west of the field. This development aims to make the 5-plus acres more viable for agricultural use and aligns with the Mid Sussex Neighbourhood Plan’s emphasis on preserving and enhancing agricultural land.

Site Context

The site is situated on the rural outskirts of Horsted Keynes, an area designated for countryside and agricultural use under the Mid Sussex District Local Plan. Currently, the land is open pasture with an approved agricultural barn (Planning Permission reference DM/22/0519, granted 28 April 2022). Historically, Horsted Keynes has a strong association with horse breeding, this is evidenced by its name and Saxon origins. Today, while some residents continue farming, many work in nearby towns such as Haywards Heath, Crawley, and East Grinstead, or commute to Brighton and London. Preserving the area's rural and traditional character remains a priority.

Description of Proposal

The proposed stable will comprise four traditional-style stables constructed from appropriate materials that blend with the rural landscape. The structure will be sited to minimize visual impact, respecting landscape features and setback requirements. Its design emphasizes practicality and unobtrusiveness, preferring traditional materials over modern, box-like structures. The fencing will continue with existing agricultural stock netting and wooden posts, with a height of less than 1.2 meters; gates will match the fencing, incorporating a mix of wood and metal.

Justification and Policy Context

This development aligns with both national and local planning policies:

National Planning Policy Framework NPPF 2019

- Paragraph 84 supports sustainable rural communities and facilities that promote rural enterprise and recreation, including stables.

- Paragraph 170 advocates for conserving and enhancing natural and built environments, which the stable's design will respect.

Mid Sussex District Local Plan 2014-2031:

- Policy WD4 Development in the Countryside: permits appropriate agricultural and rural enterprise developments, such as stables, provided they do not harm landscape character or visual amenity.
- Policy DP20 Design and Appearance: encourages proposals that are sympathetic to the rural setting and use suitable materials.

Design and Environmental Impact

The stable will be constructed using traditional materials to ensure visual harmony with the landscape. It will be located thoughtfully to reduce visibility from public viewpoints and neighboring properties. Access will be maintained via existing routes, and waste management measures will be implemented to prevent environmental impact.

Landscaping and Ecology Enhancements

A new "Tree planting area" will be established around all fenced boundaries, aiming to create wildlife corridors. Over the past three years, I have planted approximately 300 meters of native hedging, which I plan to extend to 700 meters with additional native species such as hawthorn, beech, spindle, blackthorn, hazel, holly, field maple, and buckthorn. This planting will support local wildlife, providing food and shelter, especially in winter.

Native hedging and planting gorse are integral to restoring habitat diversity—offering nesting sites for heathland, downland, and farmland birds like Dartford warblers, stonechats, linnets, and yellowhammers, as well as serving as nectar sources and refuge during harsh weather.

Construction Details

Footings will be installed to a depth of 0.150 meters, facilitating stable housing for mares and ensuring ease of cleaning and breeding management. The topsoil from foundation excavation will be returned to the land to assist in restoring grazing pasture.

Timing and Environmental Considerations

Construction will be undertaken within this calendar year to align with grazing schedules and minimize disturbance. Delaying work until after spring reduces seasonal pasture parasite burdens. The planting of native hedges and trees will contribute positively to local biodiversity, compensating for the loss of hedgerows over recent decades.

Acts and Legislation Considered

- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990: Provides the statutory framework ensuring development complies with local and national policies.
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017: Ensures development does not adversely affect protected species or habitats, with appropriate assessments undertaken if necessary.

The proposed stable block is a sustainable development that supports rural enterprise and conserves Horsted Keynes's traditional character. It complies with relevant policies and legislation, with measures incorporated to minimize environmental impact and enhance biodiversity. We respectfully request that this application be approved.