

Mid Sussex District Council
Land at Eastwood Farm
Shaves Wood Lane
Albourne
West Sussex

Our Ref: SDNP/25/00818/ADJAUT
Contact Officer: Philippa Smyth
Tel. No.: 01730 819296

17th March 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

Neighbouring Authority Consultation

Applicant: Mid Sussex District Council
Proposal: 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.

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

Thank you for your correspondence received 24 February 2025, consulting us as a neighbouring authority on the above noted development proposals.

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 statutory purposes and duty of the National Park are:

- Purpose 1:** To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.
- Purpose 2:** To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.
- Duty:** To seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park in pursuit of our purposes.

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

Duty of National Parks

Section 245 of the LURA 2023 amends and strengthens the Section 11A (2) duty of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 upon relevant authorities to "seek to further the specified purposes of Protected Landscapes."

The Government's 'Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes', published 16 December 2024, sets out that this duty is active not passive and that, as far as is reasonably practicable, 'relevant authorities should seek to avoid harm and contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, special qualities, and key

characteristics of Protected Landscapes.'

It is therefore incumbent on the National Park Authority, and all relevant authorities including neighbouring local planning authorities, to give significant weight to the S.245 duty when determining applications.

Proposed development outside the South Downs National Park but within its setting

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF sets out that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks. The scale and extent of development within designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas. The majority of the proposed development would be sited outside of the National Park. However, it would very much be within the setting of the National Park and therefore must conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty.

Landscape Impact

The Authority is pleased to see that the advice issued regarding the repurposing of the existing barns has been followed and that storage for hay and stable bedding, storage of tractors, machinery and tools and a farm workshop would be provided by the existing barns within the farmyard. This reuse does not form part of the proposed development.

However, the proposal would still result in the introduction of a significant volume of built form in an undeveloped, open, agricultural field. The scale, bulk, number and (in particular) the spread of buildings is considered to be excessive and, in some ways, more harmful than previous iterations of the scheme that have been seen by the Authority owing to the spread across the field. In particular, the proposed indoor arena with 2 wings is a substantial building that will be highly prominent in the setting of the National Park.

It is noted that rather than reducing the height of the buildings, significant engineering works are proposed in order to set buildings lower down. This is not landscape led and does not conserve or enhance the landscape. Overall, the proposed layout is highly engineered which does not respect the rural, agricultural character of the site.

It is noted that the 'all weather' turnout paddocks have been removed from the proposal. It is unclear where the horses would be turned out for exercise and wellbeing. This detail will be important and could have significant landscape impacts, depending on the proposed details.

The soft landscaping proposed appears very formal and not in keeping with the rural, agricultural character of the area. Structural tree planting is suburban and alien in this context.

Dark Skies

Whilst the majority of the proposed development would be sited outside of the National Park, inappropriate lighting in the setting of the National Park would be considered harmful and should be avoided.

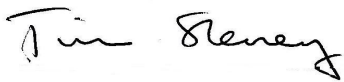
It is noted that a large number of external lights are proposed in an existing, unlit field adjacent to an area of Ancient Woodland. Very careful consideration should be given to the International Dark Night Skies Reserve and dark night skies, which are a special quality of the National Park, and the Authority would encourage a sensitive approach to both external and internal lighting which conforms to the Institute of Lighting Professionals for lighting in environmental zones, and tries to achieve zero upwards light spill in all respects.

Ecology

Very careful consideration needs to be given to the impacts on protected species and their

habitats, given the proximity of the proposed development to areas of Ancient Woodland.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Tim Slaney' in a cursive style.

TIM SLANEY

Director of Planning

South Downs National Park Authority

Contact Officer

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