

Planning Statement

Brantridge Park, Equestrian Centre,
Brantridge Lane, Balcombe, Haywards Heath,



Planning Statement

Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use or Development (CLOPUD) under Section 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), seeking confirmation that the proposed use of the existing indoor equestrian arena for occasional dressage-related activities is lawful.

Brantridge Park, Brantridge Lane, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 6FN.



CONTACT

Arena Global Management Ltd
Studio 160, 3 Edgar Buildings,
George Street, Bath BA1 2FJ
E: info@agm-ltd.co.uk
W: www.agm-ltd.co.uk

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Prepared For	Mrs Fiona Bigwood
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	Name	Position	Email
Prepared By	James Tavernor	Senior Planner	James@agm-ltd.co.uk
Checked By	John White	CEO	John@agm-ltd.co.uk
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Brantridge Park

- 1.1.1 Arena Global Management Limited is an independent planning consultancy specialising in rural and equestrian planning. AGM was the planning agent on the original application and has prepared this Planning Statement on behalf of our client, Fiona Bigwood, an international dressage rider for Great Britain and the owner of Brantridge Park.
- 1.1.2 This statement is submitted in support of an application for a Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use or Development (CLOPUD) under Section 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
- 1.1.3 The application seeks confirmation that the proposed use of the existing indoor equestrian arena for occasional dressage-related activities is lawful.

2. SITE BACKGROUND

2.1 Site Location

- 2.1.1 The site is located on the east side of Brantridge Lane in Balcombe. The site is approximately 33 hectares and comprises large areas of woodland and pasture with the main house and ancillary buildings located in the southwest corner of the estate.

2.2 Local or National Designations

- 2.2.1 The house is a Grade II Listed building and was originally the family home of Princess Alice granddaughter of Queen Victoria and has been totally refurbished to a very high standard.
- 2.2.2 The site is located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

2.3 Planning History

- 2.3.1 There is limited relevant planning history for the site, which effected the comprehensive redevelopment of the whole site under the following applications:
- DM/17/1955 – Conversion of Listed main building to a single family dwelling, with internal and external alterations and extensions, new tennis court building, swimming pool, and new equestrian complex in the grounds, to include 2 x 1 bed units in the stable building for grooms accommodation and a horse walker – Approved 14th November 2017
 - DM/17/1966 – Listed building application for the conversion of the listed main building to a single family dwelling, with internal and external alterations – Approved 14th November 2017
 - DM24/2137 - Internal and external amendments to the Stable Block to improve stabling facilities and provide a total of 6 x 1-bed and 2 x 2-bed C3 residential grooms accommodation above the stables, within the original permitted footprint. – Approved 29th April 2025

3. FIONA BIGWOOD

- 3.1.1 Fiona started riding, aged seven, at a local riding school. She was given her cousin's naughty 11.2hh Welsh pony to ride not long after. Fiona's mother, Penny, was having weekly riding lessons from Marion Larrigan and eventually persuaded her to break her rule of not teaching children.
- 3.1.2 *"Mum just nagged her endlessly. Marion is an amazing teacher and I can never repay her for what she did for me. She made dressage fun, so you didn't want to walk away from horses at 16 as so many riders do," says Fiona, who has always concentrated on dressage because of Marion. "It used to take an hour to travel from home in Kent to Surrey and on the way back in the car, we used to have dinner and do my homework."*
- 3.1.3 At the age of eight, Fiona began riding in Keston on her naughty cousins pony, Rupert. Her mother then got in contact with dressage trainer, Marion Larrigan and she agreed to help the Bigwood's and their horses. At 10 years old, Fiona was very lucky to be given the opportunity of having Tanya Larrigans old Grand Prix horse Salute on lease. This was the start of Fiona's dressage career.
- 3.1.4 *"I was lucky that Salute was being retired that year. It was such a good way to learn piaffe and passage by just playing," she says. When Fiona was 19, she moved to Denmark to train with Hasse Hoffmann for three years. "It was a completely different side of life. I went from looking after and riding my three horses at home to a big dealer's yard," she says. Then Fiona moved down to Germany to train with Jan Bemelmans followed by Dieter Laugks.*
- 3.1.5 Fiona was a member of the British team at the 1993 Junior European Championships and the Young Rider European Championships from 1994 to 1996, both times with Pablo Picasso. In 1996, 21 year old Fiona was the youngest British rider ever to be selected for a Senior European Championships with Dance & Fly. That year, she also took the British National Elementary title with Afrikka. Fiona was shortlisted for the 1998 World Equestrian Games with Dance & Fly and Macho and, in the same year, was ranked number one in the British Puffa International Rider Rankings. She ended up buying her own yard in 1998 with 54 boxes, which she ran until recently before she moved back to England and West Sussex in early 2009.
- 3.1.6 In 1999 and 2005, she was a member of the European Championship team. In 2009, Fiona performed well with Wie Atlantico, winning two Grand Prix classes, one with 70.21%. She also achieved great results with Don Lorean winning the Hickstead Premier League Freestyle Grand Prix with 71.08%.
- 3.1.7 On 26 April 2014, Fiona fell off a horse in a freak accident at a local show and sustained major concussion to her head. After four days in the hospital, she was able to return home but her life had changed dramatically. The accident left her vision seriously impaired as an eye nerve got damaged. She still has double vision and has to ride with an eye patch.

- 3.1.8 Fiona helped Team GBR win a silver medal at the 2015 European Dressage Championships in Aachen riding Penny Bigwood's Atterupgaards Orthilia. Although they qualified to go forwards to the Grand Prix Special, unfortunately the mare developed an extreme sensitivity across her back after doing her team test in pouring rain, which prevented her from contesting the individual competition.
- 3.1.9 In 2016, Fiona and Atterupgaards Orthilia were selected to represent Great Britain at the Games of the XXXI Olympiad in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; an incredible achievement.
- 3.1.10 They helped Britain claim team silver earning 77.157% to finish eighth individually in the grand prix and 74.342% in the grand prix special. This saw them qualify for the freestyle, where they scored 76.018%.
- 3.1.11 Fiona also owns 'Fame', a 14-year-old stallion, who partnered Carl Hester to the highest score of his entire career to date – 85.46% in the freestyle at the 2023 European Dressage Championships and who he will be riding at the Paris Olympics 2024.
- 3.1.12 Fiona's daughter, Mette, has also continued the family legacy in dressage and representing Great Britain. She helped lead the British team to bronze at the Dressage Junior European Championships in Kronberg, Germany in 2023.



Fiona Bigwood at the Rio Olympics 2016

4. CERTIFICATE OF LAWFULNESS OF PROPOSED USE OR DEVELOPMENT (CLOPUD)

- 4.1.1 This statement is submitted in support of an application for a Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use or Development (CLOPUD) under Section 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), seeking confirmation that the proposed use of the existing indoor equestrian arena for occasional dressage-related activities is lawful.
- 4.1.2 Planning permission was granted under reference DM/17/1955 on 14th November 2017 for the conversion of the listed main building to a single family dwelling, alongside internal and external alterations and extensions, a new tennis court building, swimming pool, and the construction of a new equestrian complex. The equestrian facilities include an indoor arena, stable building with two one-bedroom grooms' accommodation units, and a horse walker. The Officer's Report notes that these facilities were proposed for private use only, with no commercial use envisaged.
- 4.1.3 The equestrian complex, including the indoor arena, is lawfully implemented and used for purposes ancillary to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse, including general riding, training, and horse care.
- 4.1.4 The current proposal relates to the use of the indoor arena on a limited basis, specifically twice per month, by the British Dressage Society to facilitate the training of judges and riders. This would comprise low-key, organised training sessions rather than competitive events, and would remain limited in frequency and scale.
- 4.1.5 Whilst the original permission references private use with no commercial activity, the proposed use does not materially alter the character or function of the site. The activities would remain closely aligned with the established equestrian use and are of a scale that is consistent with the lawful use of the arena. The primary use of the site as a single dwelling with ancillary equestrian facilities would remain unchanged.
- 4.1.6 The proposed use is infrequent and would not give rise to any unacceptable impacts. Vehicle movements associated with two sessions per month would be minimal, and the site already benefits from appropriate access arrangements and sufficient on-site parking provision to accommodate such activity. There would be no material increase in noise or disturbance, and no physical alterations to the site are proposed.
- 4.1.7 In considering whether a material change of use would occur, it is relevant that the overall character of the use would remain as a private equestrian facility serving the dwelling. The limited and occasional nature of the proposed activities would not result in an intensification sufficient to constitute a material change of use. As such, the proposal is considered to remain ancillary to the primary residential use.
- 4.1.8 Accordingly, the proposed use is considered to be lawful and not to require planning permission.

- 4.1.9 The Local Planning Authority is therefore respectfully requested to issue a Certificate of Lawfulness confirming that the proposed use described above is lawful.