



“Paw Paddock” is located within the Parish of East Grinstead, West Sussex. Our aim is to offer a secure dog walking facility for residents to walk their dog in a safe environment, with exclusive hire of low-quality agricultural land.

The idea behind this application is driven by a huge demand to be able to allow dogs dealing with social or behavioural difficulties to walk freely without the fear of loss or interaction with other dogs/wildlife. The site will be limited to exclusive use with a maximum of 4 dogs, an amount currently often exceeded by locals walking on the property outside of this proposal. The future success (and proven demand) of this proposed site can be further demonstrated by our other sites – Paw Paddock – Donnington, Paw Paddock – Shripney, Paw Paddock – Westbourne, Paw Paddock – Fareham, Paw Paddock – Horsham, Paw Paddock – Bullington, Paw Paddock – Portsdown Hill, Paw Paddock – East Meon, Paw Paddock – Wickham, Paw Paddock – Andover, Paw Paddock – Mapledurwell, Paw Paddock – Ashington, Paw Paddock – Romsey, Paw Paddock – Upham, Paw Paddock – Worthing, Paw Paddock – Liss, Paw Paddock – Moundsmere, Paw Paddock – Cuckfield and most locally Paw Paddock - Balcombe which all run at capacity with no complaints and a multitude of happy customers – all customers, previously limited to walking in otherwise protected areas such as South Downs National Park, the area of outstanding natural beauty and ancient woodlands nearby. Each of the proposed sites have been granted full planning permission, reference document attached to application.

Proposal:

This application is to allow a change of use on agricultural land, alongside the instalment of deer fencing to secure the area. The site has been sensitively selected and will offer minimal to no impact on the local area or the visual appearance of the countryside. All the materials used are commonly known to those familiar to the countryside, for example mobile horse field shelter and agricultural stock deer fencing - both permissible without prior consent, as agricultural items.

As the site will be limited to 4 dogs per exclusive booking, we are confident that there will be no noise created due to the visiting dogs being in familiar company – this is our experienced opinion from running 12 more of these ventures. We have received no noise complaints to date. If this were to change, the management plan would be to remove access to the site for noisy dogs.

Access:

The site will be accessed via the existing entrance off Vowels Lane. A small parking area will be available – enclosed inside the line of the fence. Because visitors are given exclusive use, we would expect and plan for maximum of two cars per booking – with ample space for cars to turn before re-entering the carriage way, with good fields of vision. The parking design allows space for the most extreme case – two cars waiting and two cars in use whilst still leaving turning space.



Fencing:

The fencing is “deer stock fencing” (example to right) and designed to stand 6ft high, consisting of wooden poles connected with stock fencing. This will provide the security required to ensure no dog can leave the site unattended, as well as being an item used in standard farming practice and not considered ‘out of place’ in the countryside. The fencing can currently be achieved without prior consent as it represents normal farming practice.



Noise Impact assessment:

Noise has been considered with our previous applications and this one. Dogs from the same household do not tend to bark and a noise assessment can only measure noise and not a lack of it. We limit our users to four dogs per visit and the action plan is in place that if we are to have an issue with a particular user, they will be refused entry. Our site has been suitably selected for minimum to no impact.

Lighting assessment:

The site will be limited to only functioning for set opening hours 07:00 to 20:00 Monday to Saturday and 08:00 to 20:00 on Sundays and bank holiday OR sunrise and sunset, whichever is earlier. There will be no artificial light and no customers using the site beyond dark. Therefore, no light assessment is necessary.

Local Plan:

This site has been strategically selected based on many factors, many of which tie in on not only a national framework but the local plan.

National Planning Policy Framework focuses on providing appropriate sustainable development.

Section 3: Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy (paragraph 28) advises that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive

approach to sustainable new development. It identifies that local and neighbourhood plans should support rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit business in rural areas, communities, and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor's facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres.

The need for a rural location and sustainability:

Paw Paddock has a need for a rural location due to its very nature, the exercising of dogs off the lead is not safe within an urban area and, naturally, our customers desire a pleasant countryside setting in which they can give their beloved dogs space to run. The site has been considerably chosen to use low value agricultural land, as well as minimal material change to the land itself; the only material development will be the erection of a traditional stock farm fence and a field shelter. As mentioned previously – this is something that could be done within normal farming practice without prior consent.

The South has one of the highest populations of household dogs in the whole of the United Kingdom, currently estimated at 1.3 dogs per home – with this amount growing. The National Trust, South Downs National Park and the NFU all recognise the potential problems that arise with a huge increase in pet dogs and the space required to exercise them – and the attempt to control this has been well documented. Paw Paddock is a solution to this problem; a further facility for this growing demand and will aid in relieving pressures within the local area, as well as the detrimental impact on local wildlife. Currently, our other sites welcome dogs who would otherwise be contributing to the identified problems that the professional bodies are trying desperately to reduce.

There was previous initiative to create a network of dog activities outside of the South Downs National Park that was backed by The National Trust, South Downs National Park, and local conservancies. It is proven that dogs walking in the area were negatively affecting the local habitat – in particular ground nesting birds whose feeding and migration patterns were being interrupted, and in worse cases, were being exposed to injury. Our dog walking facility will offer a service that allows dogs to be free from a lead in a completely secure environment, not only relieving pressure on the owner, but on the National Park itself. We can offer a service not currently available within the park or local to it.

Areas across the South have some of the highest level of livestock worrying in the whole of the United Kingdom, with Hampshire Constabulary's Country Watch team having recently issued a stark warning to dog walkers to 'keep dogs on leads in rural areas or face possible prosecution'. Following a recent survey carried out by the NFU Mutual, they found many dog owners are unaware that even if their pet doesn't make contact with a sheep, the distress and exhaustion caused by being chased, can trigger a pregnant ewe to die or miscarry. Young lambs can also become separated from their mothers.

Nearly two thirds of owners (64%) say they let their dog roam off-lead in the countryside. However almost four in ten (39%) admit their pets do not always come back when called. The harsh reality of some dog owners' failure to control their pets is evident in the latest figures based on claims date from the NFU Mutual, which estimates dog attacks on UK farm animals cost £1.8million in 2022 (£273,000 being in the South alone).

The NFU has recently debated in the house of commons on how to tackle such an important issue. The NFU states that there has been an increase of 50% in insurance claims against livestock worrying

since 2019. As a farmer myself I can testify personally; only two years ago I had a case of dogs in with sheep – and although no sheep were injured, the effect this had on unborn lambs cannot be overlooked. Once again, my site will allow people to responsibly walk dogs off a lead in a controlled environment.

As well as having a positive response from every person that I have discussed this with, I have a concrete business plan for its success and a proven business model. We are also pleased to offer testimonials from previous customers, as well as testament from local residents with a desire to use such a facility. With vast development plans across the south using up land well known by locals as a place to walk dogs to build more housing, the need in the area will be heightened and the pressures on the National Park and broader countryside will grow – providing even more justification for this proposal.

In summary, the South has a vast number of household dogs compared to the national average, as well as a high number of at risk and well protected areas. There is an issue with dogs in the local area proven by the various action plans and statements from multiple large organisations that have tried to help relieve pressures by educating dog owners and offering facilities in which to exercise dogs outside of these areas, proving that this is an issue that needs to be addressed. These issues will only be exacerbated further by local development and the loss of walking areas.

Paw Paddock will offer such relief; a place where dogs can be exercised in a safe and secure environment, protecting natural wildlife, easing pressures on local professional bodies and all the while increasing the enjoyment for dogs and their owners alike. I am confident that this proposal demonstrates a clear need for a facility such as Paw Paddock, not only in supporting a district council initiative but meeting a clear local demand. This proposal is in keeping with the national incentive for diversification within rural communities and finds a legitimate use for low value agricultural land, with very little material effect on the local area. The site has been carefully considered to ensure good existing access with sensitivity towards any local residence. This proposal will be offering a new facility that can benefit many in the local area, with the closest similar site being our own well established and highly successful site in Balcombe.