

PLANNING STATEMENT

**Planning application for the change of use of land for an outdoor riding arena
60m x 30m ancillary to the existing private equestrian use of the site**

**Ludham Farm, Cinder Hill Lane, Horsted Keynes, Haywards Heath, West
Sussex RH17 7EG**



Prepared by:

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Contents

- 1.0 Introduction**
- 2.0 The Site**
- 3.0 Planning History**
- 4.0 Proposal**
- 5.0 Planning Policy**
- 6.0 Justification for Proposed Facilities**
- 7.0 Conclusion**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A planning application is being submitted for an outdoor riding arena 60m x 30m on land at Ludham Farm, Cinder Hill Lane, Horsted Keynes, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH17 7EG on behalf of Ms Mary-Pat Sheridan.
- 1.2 The proposal is for a riding arena, ancillary to the existing private equestrian use of the site, for riding the family's horses.
- 1.3 I am a rural planning consultant specialising in the equestrian development sector. I hold BSc Equine Welfare with Business Management, LLDip Law degree and PgC Agricultural Law. I advise the public and private sectors throughout the UK, preparing independent appraisals and attending appeal hearings and public inquiries. I have an in depth knowledge of the equine industry and equine welfare.
- 1.4 With formal academic qualifications in law, business management, equine science and behaviour, I act as expert witness in litigation and prepare expert reports for solicitors in relation to personal injury cases, disputes and veterinary negligence.

2.0 The Site

- 2.1 Ludham Farm comprises the farmhouse as well as a number of old farm buildings, stables, a small riding arena and substantial area of hardstanding.
- 2.2 The site lies on the west of Cinder Hill Lane opposite the Horsted Keynes Industrial Estate and is within the High Weald AONB.
- 2.3 The site has a well-established use for the keeping of horses and comprises approximately 24 acres of land.

2.4 A public footpath runs close to the south boundary of the property, which will be close to the southern end of the arena. However, as the paddocks are already fenced with post and rails, and post and tape, it is not considered that the appearance of the arena fencing will be significantly different to cause visual harm.

2.5 Location of proposed arena close to existing buildings:



2.6 Fence line along which arena will sit:



2.7 Fence line along which the long side of the arena will sit:



3.0 Planning History

- 3.1 There is extensive planning history relating to Ludham Farm, in the ownership of the applicant since 2017, with the approval of conversion of a barn to a holiday let in 2022 being the most recent. However, the planning history relevant to the equestrian facilities is limited to two applications:

08/01976/FUL Replacement of existing stables, barns, outbuildings and open air sand school with new stable block linked to new covered sand school. Closure of two existing accesses from highway and formation of single new access to highway. – Approved 21st August 2008

11/01556/EOT Replacement of existing stables, barns, outbuildings and open air sand school with new stable block linked to new covered sand school. Closure of two existing accesses from highway and formation of single new access to highway. As per previously approved application 08/01976/FUL - Approved 13th July 2011

- 3.2 The first application included the replacement of the existing stables, barns, outbuildings, and outdoor riding arena, with improved equestrian facilities and an indoor riding arena.
- 3.3 This application lapsed but a subsequent application renewed the permission. However, this also lapsed in July 2014.

4.0 Proposal

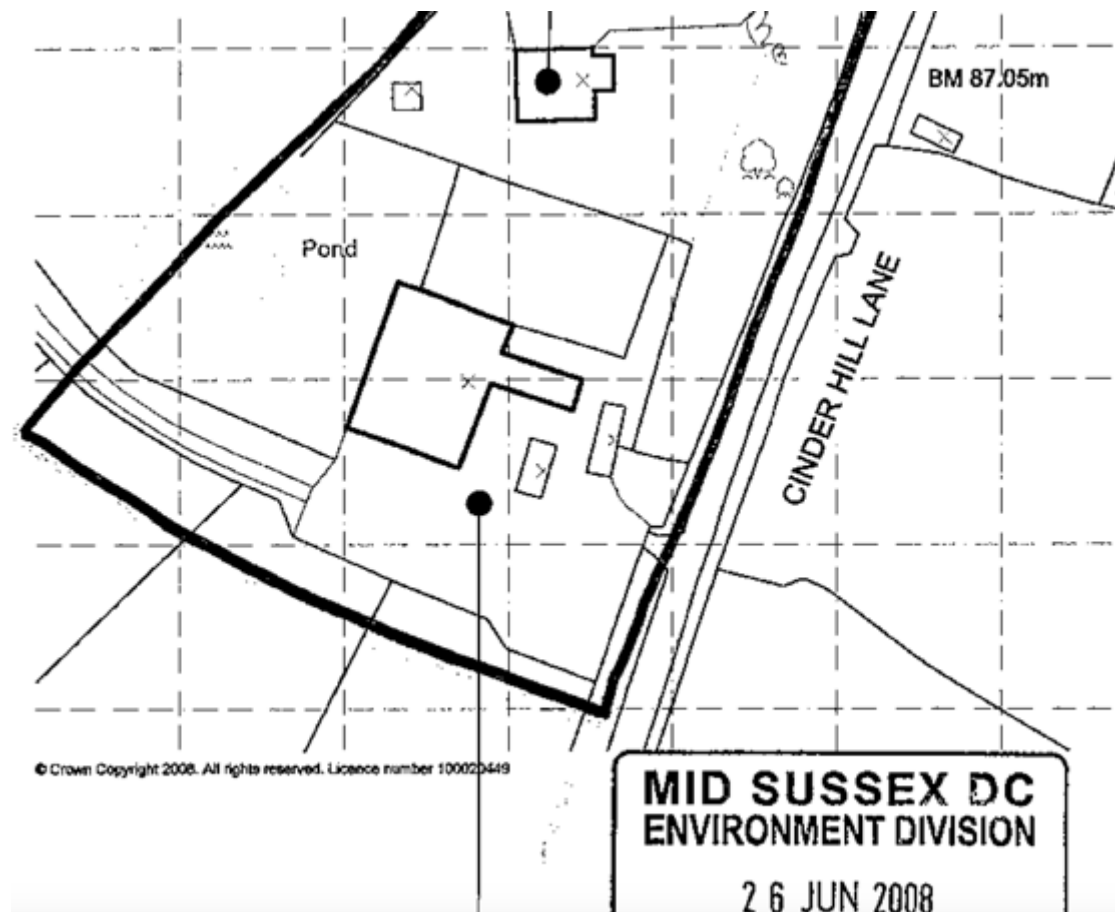
4.1 The current proposal comprises the following:

- Change of use of land for the siting of an outdoor riding arena measuring 60m x 30m.

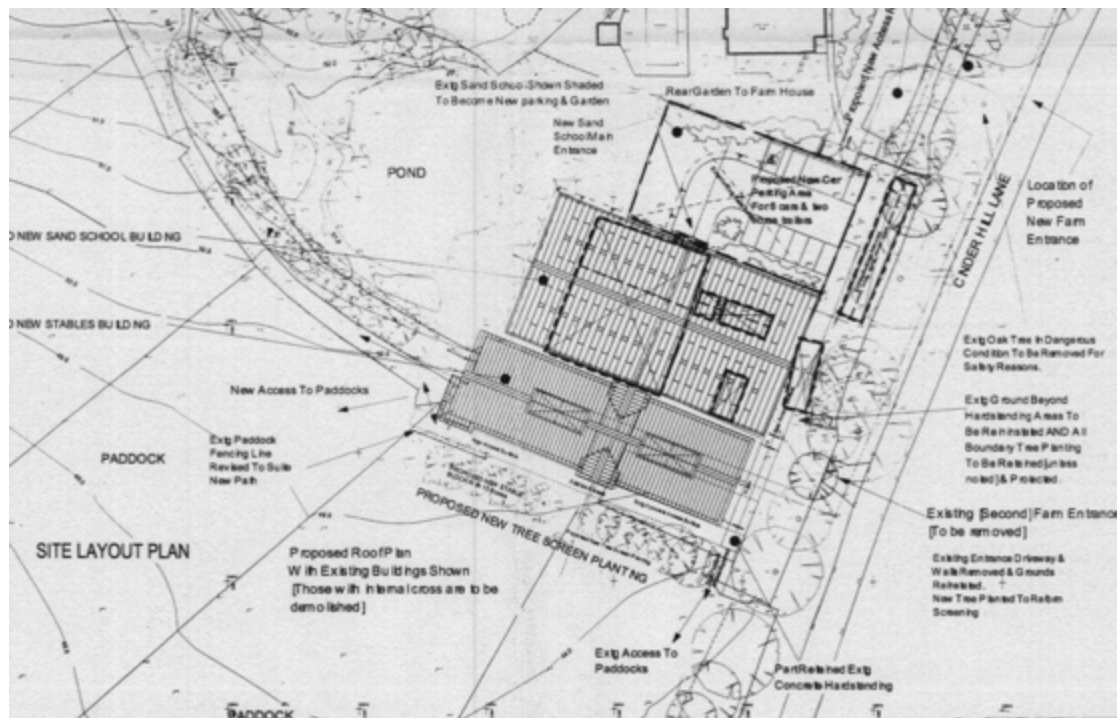
4.2 A small area of hardstanding between the gate and the arena is proposed. Some hardstanding already exists but needs to be improved to prevent mud build up etc.

4.3 The arena will be fenced with timber posts and rails.

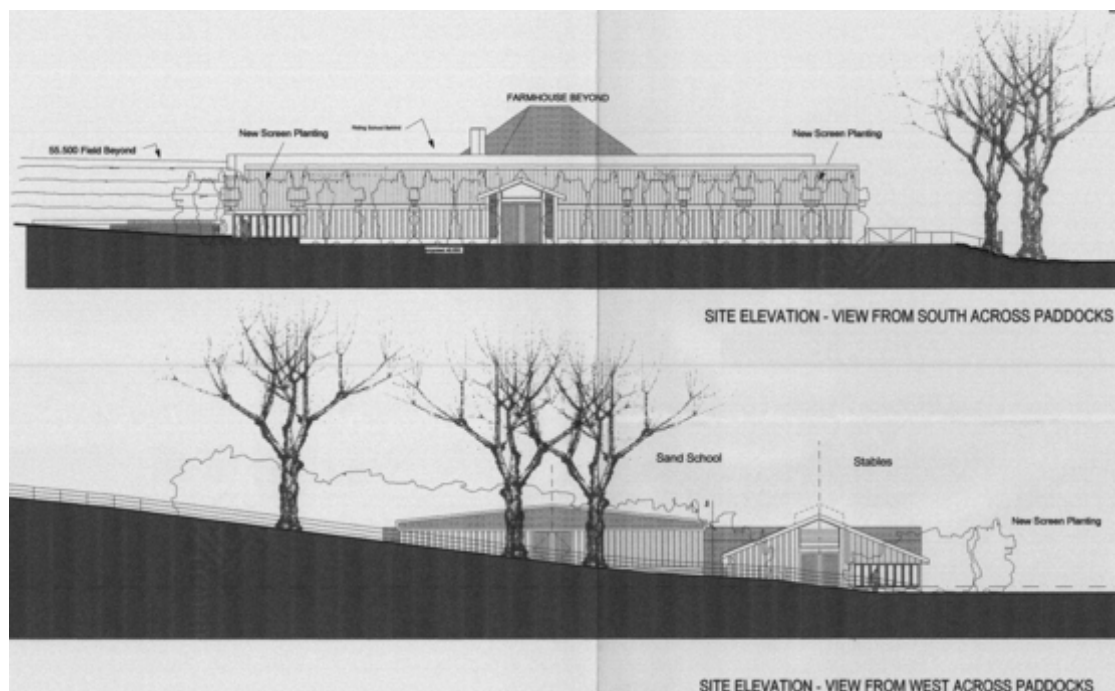
4.4 The extensive proposals previously approved are not being submitted. This application relates only to a new outdoor riding arena. The plan below shows the 'red line' of the previously approved application, which includes the top of the now proposed arena.



- 4.5 The plan below is the site plan of the previously approved application. This shows the position of the stable building immediately north of the proposed arena with the paddock boundary moved slightly to the south.



- 4.6 Elevations of the approved application showing the view from the public right of way. Seen in the context of this approval, the arena will have minimal impact.



- 4.7 Due to the need of the arena to be 60m long, the only suitable position is just outside the existing yard area. However, it is as close to the existing equestrian facilities as it is possible to achieve, which ensures that the holding remains as compact as possible.
- 4.8 The position of the proposed arena is on land that is level, which necessitates the least groundworks. This means that should the arena no longer be needed in the future the land can be restored with relative ease.
- 4.9 It is worth noting that the arena is not a 'built' structure in the sense that it can be seen on the skyline, but merely a change of use of the land, which is capable of being reinstated.
- 4.10 Due to the height and density of the hedge along the eastern boundary, there will be no visibility from the lane.
- 4.11 No trees or hedges will be removed or disturbed.
- 4.12 No changes to the existing access to the property are proposed.
- 4.13 There will be no increase in vehicle movements as a result of the arena. In fact, it is likely that the number of trips will be reduced as it will no longer be necessary to take the horses to off-site training facilities.
- 4.14 Lighting is proposed for use during the winter, to enable the horses to be exercised after 4.00pm, at which point it becomes too dark. However, this will effectively be a replacement for the existing lighting on the old sand school, which will no longer be used for riding.

5.0 Planning Policy

5.1 The relevant national and local policies in examining this application are set out below:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2023
- Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031 March 2018

5.2 The proposal for a riding arena for outdoor sport and recreational use is not specifically referred to in the NPPF, with the exception of paragraph 154 ‘appropriate development’. However, the following paragraphs could be deemed applicable:

Paragraph 11 *‘Plans should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development’;*

Paragraph 96 *‘Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places and beautiful buildings which:*

c) enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

NPPF paragraph 123 states that planning decisions should recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, to include recreation uses:

124. Planning policies and decisions should:

a) encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside;

b) recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production;

5.3 Mid Sussex District Plan 2018:

DP12 Protection and Enhancement of Countryside

Mid Sussex is a rural District, and the countryside is an asset that is highly valued by the Council and local residents and is recognised as having social value in enhancing the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors. The countryside is a working environment that needs to be managed in a way that enhances the attractiveness of the rural environment whilst enabling traditional rural activities to continue.

The primary objective of the District Plan with respect to the countryside is to secure its protection by minimising the amount of land taken for development and preventing development that does not need to be there. At the same time, it seeks to enhance the countryside, support the rural economy by accommodating well-designed, appropriate new forms of development and changes in land use where a countryside location is required and where it does not adversely affect the rural environment.

DP12:

Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; 11) To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination; and 15) To create places that encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations.

5.4 **DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

Small scale proposals which support the economy and social well-being of the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported.

5.5 **DP24: Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Activities**

The National Planning Policy Framework (section 8), recognises the important role that the planning system has in promoting healthy communities. A strategic objective of the Plan is to create places that encourage healthy lifestyles by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations. The District Council has adopted a Leisure and Cultural Strategy to increase participation in arts and culture, sport and physical activity of those living and working in the District.

Also supports Objective 15:

To create places that encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations.

Development that provides new and/or enhanced leisure and cultural activities and facilities, including allotments, in accordance with the strategic aims of the Leisure and Cultural Strategy for Mid Sussex will be supported.

5.6 The proposal is an essential facility for the outdoor sport and recreation of the applicant and her family, ancillary to the residential use of the property.

5.7 The proposal, which is the minimum necessary to enable it to fulfil its purpose, is ancillary to the lawful equestrian use.

5.8 The arena, although just outside the built-up area, is substantially less than the proposal approved in 2008 and 2011.

5.9 The previously approved development included the indoor arena, which had a height of 6.8m to the ridge. In contrast, the exercise and training facility now proposed does not involve any 'built form'.

5.10 The position of the arena is sited immediately adjacent to the equestrian facilities and is well-screened so that it is more sensitive to its surroundings than the previously approved indoor arena.

5.11 The Officer's Report 11/01556/EOT stated:

In conclusion, whilst the replacement stable buildings and covered sand school are substantial in size, they are not considered to cause significant harm to the visual amenities of the locality and/or wider landscape or to the amenities of the nearby residents and other countryside users. The application is therefore considered to comply with the relevant criteria of Policies C1, C4 and R12 of the Mid Sussex Local Plan and can therefore be supported.

6.0 Justification for Proposed Facilities

6.1 The applicant purchased the property in 2017. Since that time the property has been used for the family's recreational equestrian use.

6.2 The applicant's daughter rides competitively in affiliated British Eventing (BE) competitions. Eventing comprises three disciplines of dressage, cross-country and show jumping.

6.3 The existing riding arena is too small to be used for training, measuring just 19m x 30m. Typically, the smallest arena in which horses can be safely exercised is 20m x 40m.

6.4 However, the horses on site are large horses for competitive eventing, with the Warmblood being 16.3hh. The existing arena is far too small to exercise such large horses safely. Training specifically requires a larger arena. This means that training has to be undertaken at other yards with facilities for hire.

- 6.5 The dressage arena in competition is 60m x 20m. Accordingly, to train for competition, an arena must be at least 60m long.
- 6.6 In competition, the showjumping arena is very large. An arena of 30m width is the minimum that can enable a small course of fences to be jumped safely.
- 6.7 When training horses, an enclosed area with a suitable surface is essential.
- 6.8 For most horses, being in a confined area with fencing can encourage them to concentrate and they are less likely to be difficult. This provides a much safer environment for the rider than being in an open field.
- 6.9 The surface ensures that the horses' legs are less susceptible to damage caused by concussion than they would be if ridden in the field. This is because the ground is often too hard, particularly for jumping. Equally, if the ground is too soft, then tendons and ligaments can be strained.
- 6.10 Such injuries, besides being a welfare issue, can result in a horse not being ridden for weeks at a time. During this time, they become unfit, and a whole competition season can be lost.
- 6.11 In addition, if horses are trained in the paddock, the grassland can become damaged.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposal is appropriate and proportionate to the lawful private equestrian use of the site, being ancillary to the enjoyment of the residential dwelling.
- 7.2 Due to the site being well-screened, and the particular siting of the arena, there will be no adverse impacts on the character of the landscape or nearby residents.
- 7.3 Due to the strictly private recreational equestrian use of the site, the proposal will not result in an increase in traffic movements.

7.4 The proposal fully complies with the NPPF and Local Plan policies.