
OUR REF: 1839

DESIGN ACCESS AND PLANNING STATEMENT

NURSTEAD HILL FARM, NURSTEAD LANE, LONGFIELD HILL, DA3 7AN

JUNE 2021

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This Statement is prepared in support of an application for the change of use of a former farm building to provide an equestrian water treadmill for horse rehabilitation, at Nurstead Hill Farm.
- 1.2** The proposed facility is primarily to serve the needs of horses kept at the site in connection with the applicant's horse breeding business but it is also intended to offer the facility to local stable yards so that they can benefit from the ability to maintain horse fitness and provide for treatment of injuries.

2.0 SITE CONTEXT

- 2.1** The application site extending to 0.1 hectares is located to the south side of Nurstead Lane just to the east of the settlement of Longfield Hill.
- 2.2** The building consists of a former corn store that in more recent times has been used for storage. It is a detached portal framed building located within the original farmyard with further buildings located to the north, east and west of this building. Access to the yard is from an entrance at the south east corner that links to the internal farm road. The main vehicular access to the site is from Nurstead Lane at a location further to the east.
- 2.3** To the south and east of the farmyard it abuts a residential caravan site that is within the applicant's control. To the west, is Nurstead Hall a detached dwelling house located some 30 m from this building.
- 2.4** Within the farm there are a range of stables, tack room and feed room and to the east of the caravan site, there is a sand school used for exercising and bringing-on young horses.

3.0 APPLICANT'S BUSINESS

- 3.1** The applicants have a horse breeding business based at Nurstead Hill Farm and they specialise in producing Andalusian and Friesian horses. They have a total of seven breeding mares and five stallions from which they produce young horses. There are currently 19 horses on site.
- 3.2** They have gained a good reputation as breeders and have won awards notably at the Windsor Horse Show within the breeding categories.
- 3.3** This is a family business involving three generations of the family who actively participate in the breeding business.

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

GR/93/662 – Prior Approval not required for infill store and new farm access, dated 23.11.93.

GR/95/456 – Lawful Development Certificate for storage of touring caravans, granted 06.09.95.

GR/95/454 – Planning Permission granted for continued use of farm buildings for storage of touring caravans, dated 15.09.95.

GR/97/135 – Prior Approval not required for implement store as infill between existing buildings, dated 22.04.97.

GR/2010 1099 – Lawful Development Certificate granted for use of building for storage purposes unrelated to agriculture but not amounting to a commercial B8 storage, dated 20.05.2013.

5.0 DESIGN

- 5.1** The objective of this proposal is to enable horses to be trained in water to enhance endurance and muscle power. The procedures are fully controllable and can target specific muscle groups and buoyancy lowers the high pressure on the skeleton and tendons. In addition, movement against water motivates the horse to increase their natural movement pattern. In particular, it increases use of back and rear muscles creating more balance and co-ordination. It is particularly helpful for treatment of injuries.
- 5.2** The water treadmill will be installed within the existing building as indicated on the layout plan. It consists of an above ground container with glass walls that allows the horse to be viewed during training. The container allows for a maximum depth of 1 m of water for resistance working. It also incorporates an incline feature of up to 12% and a trot rate of up to 12 KPH.
- 5.3** The water is held in tanks at the base of the unit and is filtered so that it can be used for up to 6 weeks before there is a need to change the water. It is intended that when the water is drained from the tanks it will be used for irrigation around the farm. A bowser will be used for this purpose.
- 5.4** It is intended to utilise the latest technology for equine cryotherapy and the applicants intend to utilise a British made facility for this purpose.
- 5.5** The procedure for each horse can last between 5 minutes up to 45 minutes and there is a time between each use of the facility to allow the horse to be cleaned down, the water pumped into the facility and then the water removed into the tanks and the horse taken out of the facility.
- 5.6** A second horse spa will also be provided within the building to add to the range of facilities available.

5.7 It is envisaged that the facility will be used for between three and eight procedures per day and it is hoped that some of these slots will be used by local stable yards to treat their horses.

5.8 There will be no need for any external alterations to the building.

5.9 The applicants are hoping that the provision of this facility will enable them to take on additional staff and to also take on an apprentice in association with Hadlow College in Kent.

6.0 ACCESS

6.1 There is a suitable vehicle access already existing to serve the farm and this accommodates the normal traffic movements associated with a farm as well as movements associated with the caravan site.

6.2 The family who are providing the main staff for the facility already live locally within Longfield Hill.

6.3 The applicant's horses are all kept on this site and they will not involve any traffic movements associated with this use when they are taking advantage of the facility.

6.4 It is hoped that local stable yards within the immediate vicinity will take advantage of this facility and they will be able to walk or ride their horses to the site for treatment.

6.5 It is therefore likely to be only a small minority of horses using the facility that will be brought to the site in horseboxes or trailers. There is space within the yard for them to turn around and park for loading/offloading horses without obstructing general traffic movements around the site.

6.6 It is not considered that traffic movements associated with this facility will amount to any material increase in traffic movements on the local road network.

7.0 PLANNING POLICY

7.1 The adopted planning policy for the area is contained within the Gravesham Core Strategy and the Gravesham Local Plan.

7.2 The Core Strategy contains a Policy CS12 relating to green infrastructure that is particularly concerned with protecting designated sites for biodiversity, landscape areas etc. It is noted that the application site does not fall within any of these especially protected areas.

7.3 At CS13 the Core Strategy contains a policy for the provision of green space and facilities for sport and recreation. However, it makes no specific reference to equestrian type uses.

7.4 Within the overall strategy, the application site is located within the Green Belt.

7.5 The Gravesham Local Plan contains more detailed policies, but it is now severely out of date. However, some of the original policies have been saved.

7.6 Policy C11, the Local Plan sets out criteria for the conversion of farm buildings to other uses:

The building is no longer needed for agriculture.

The building is of permanent and substantial construction.

The building is attractive having some architectural historic or landscape interest.

The proposed use will diversify the rural economy.

The curtilage is confined to the minimum necessary to operate the use.

The nature and intensity of the use is not detrimental to amenity or traffic safety.

Comment: In this case, the building has been out of agricultural use for many years, it is of permanent and substantial construction. However, the requirement to be of architectural historical landscape interest is no longer a relevant criteria as explained below under NPPF. The use will provide diversity to the rural economy. The curtilage is the minimum necessary to operate the use. The use will not be detrimental to amenity or traffic safety.

7.7 The NPPF is a material consideration in determining a planning application and is particularly relevant where the Local Plan is out of date. At paragraph 146, the NPPF sets out certain other forms of development that are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. At subparagraph (d) it states:

The re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.

Comment: It is apparent that the long list of criteria set out in the Local Plan is not brought forward within the NPPF and it would appear that this building meets the relevant criteria.

8.0 PLANNING ISSUES

8.1 It is considered that there are five main planning issues in this case, and these are addressed below under separate subheadings.

Green Belt

8.2 The proposed re-use of this building from its previous use for storage to a new specialist equestrian use is considered to fall within Para 146 of NPPF. In this case, the building is of substantial construction and is a permanent structure within the farmyard. On this basis, it is considered that it conforms with the relevant criteria and is therefore to be regarded as not inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

Rural Economy

- 8.3** The proposal will add to the diversification of the farm business at this location and will enable an existing horse breeding business to provide better facilities for their own horses and also to provide a service to local stable yard's.
- 8.4** As explained above, the applicants hope that this will allow them to take on additional staff and particularly to employ an apprentice in association with Hadlow College.

Character of the Area

- 8.5** The proposal will not involve any external alteration to this building and will therefore not impact on the character of this part of the rural area of Gravesham.
- 8.6** The use is in association with the already established horse breeding business at the site for which purpose there are already outdoor facilities to serve this activity.
- 8.7** It is not therefore considered that there will not be any harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area.

Amenity

- 8.8** There is unlikely to be any impact on nearby residents from this activity as it will be contained within an existing building. The main entrance to the building is located on the east side facing into the farmyard.
- 8.9** The closest residents to the new facility are the residents of the caravan park which is owned by the applicant's family. The applicants will manage the facility so that it does not cause nuisance to any of their tenants within the adjoining caravan park.
- 8.10** As explained above, the building is some 30 m from the nearest residential dwelling outside of the applicant's ownership and in this case, the entrance door to the building is located on the east side away from the boundary with this neighbour.
- 8.11** There will be a limited number of vehicle movements associated with this use but it is not considered that they will impact on neighbouring residents.

Traffic

- 8.12** As explained above, the main part of the use of this facility will be for the horse breeding business already located at this site. Other users are likely to be mainly from local stable yard's where horses can be ridden or walk to the site without the need to load them into a horsebox or trailer. Only a small minority of users are likely to arrive by horsebox or trailer.
- 8.13** It is considered that this limited number of traffic movements can be accommodated on the local road network without causing danger or inconvenience to other road

users. It will not result in a material increase in traffic movements on this part of the highway network.

9.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1** It is considered that this is a suitable form of re-use for this former agricultural building that will add to the facilities available to an existing rural business.
- 9.2** It is to be regarded as an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt that meets the criteria as set out in the relevant NPPF.
- 9.3** The proposal will not cause any other harm in respect of amenity, traffic or on the character of the local area.
- 9.4** For all these reasons, the Council are respectfully requested to grant planning permission for this development.