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PLANNING CONSULTANCY

PLANNING STATEMENT

Erection of horse riding arena and associated fencing for private use only at The Stables, Shawfield Lane, Norden, Rochdale, OL12 6BP



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1.0 Background

- 1.1** Mark Jones Planning Consultancy has been appointed to address the planning policy issues regarding a proposed horse riding arena with post and rail fencing at The Stables, Shawfield Lane, Norden, Rochdale.

2.0 Location

- 2.1** The application forms part of a historic equestrian use connected to Shawfield Fold Farm that obtained planning permission in 1985 (85/D18472). The equestrian land now forms part of the residential property known as The Stables, which is located within the hamlet of Shawfield. The Stables is a large two storey property with a large garden. In addition it has a small barn, stables for up to 5 horses and over 12 Acres of grazing land.
- 2.2** To the north of the application site is a public right of way which will not be affected by the proposal.
- 2.3** The site is located within the Greater Manchester Green Belt.

3.0 Planning Proposal

- 3.1** The applicant currently keeps four horses on the land. As part of the equestrian use planning permission is being sought to build a small horse riding arena for the applicant's personal use. The arena extends to 30 metres by 21 metres and will be enclosed with a post and rail fence. The application site slightly slopes and as such will be cut and filled into the landscape to create a level surface. A short gabion retaining wall is proposed along part of the site and the earth will be cut back and grass seeded to reflect the contours of the surrounding land.
- 3.2** One of the applicant's horses has medical needs which means that it is unable to graze extensively on the open fields. One of the other horses is a rescue animal and is unable to leave the security of the land. The proposed horse riding arena therefore has two uses. Firstly it is to exercise the horses, but also to provide a safe external environment for two of the horses to be kept.

4.0 Planning Policy and Assessment

- 4.1** During September 2004 the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 ('the Act') came into effect which reformed the development planning system in England. Section 38(6) of the Act requires that all planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan, provide the policies or proposals it contains are relevant and unless '*material considerations*' indicate otherwise.

- 4.2 The development must therefore be assessed against National Planning Policy in the form of the National Planning Policy Statement and the Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan and Core Strategy.

National Planning Policy Framework (Framework)

- 4.3 Paragraph 11 of the Framework sets out that a presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework also advises that decision takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. Sub-section c) of paragraph 11 seeks to approve development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

Achieving well-designed places

- 4.4 Section 12 of the NPPF refers to achieving well-designed places. Paragraph 126 states that the creation of high quality, beautiful and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.

Green Belt

- 4.5 The site lies within the Green Belt. Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. Paragraph 137 of the Framework explains that the fundamental aim of Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.
- 4.6 The Framework, at paragraph 149, indicates that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in Green Belt, unless it meets one of the exceptions. Paragraph 149 (b) states an exception to this would be the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- 4.7 Paragraph 150 of the Framework deals with other forms of development which are not inappropriate in the Green Belt, subject to a test of the effect on openness. A horse riding arena is considered to fall under paragraph 150(b) as an engineering operation.

Rochdale Unitary Development Plan – June 2006

- 4.8 The site is located within the Greater Manchester Green Belt. The UDP policies in terms of Green Belt generally reflect those of the Framework.

4.9 The key issues that need to be addressed are:-

- Whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the Framework and the development plan, and the effect upon openness and the purposes of including land within the Green Belt;
- If the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, whether the harm by reason on inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

Planning Assessment

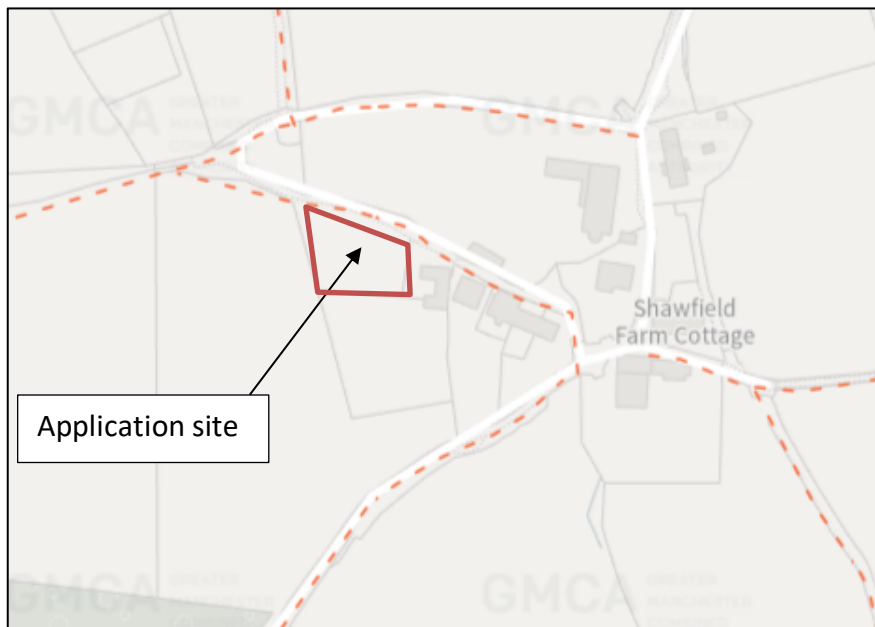
Inappropriate Development

- 4.10 Should the proposed riding arena be classified as the ‘construction of a new building’ it would be an appropriate facility for the existing sport and recreational use of the land. It has been designed to meet national standards with regards to horse riding arenas. It is of a proportionate scale and design for the stabling of 5 horses and within a landholding of over 12 Ha. It would be considered ‘appropriate facilities’ for outdoor recreation as permitted by paragraph 149 (b) of the Framework.
- 4.11 As the arena is an ‘appropriate facility’ the second part of the exception requires it to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and should not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The arena is to be positioned directly to the side of the existing stables, access and dwellinghouse. The length of the arena will follow the contours of the land so as to reduce its visual impact and openness of the Green Belt. Retaining structures and engineering operations have been kept to a minimum to create a flat arena.
- 4.12 The arena will be enclosed with post and rail timber fence that will look in keeping with the rural surroundings.
- 4.13 The site of the arena is located close to the existing stables where a horse riding arena would not look out of place.
- 4.14 The arena stable is considered to be an appropriate development in the Green Belt and an exception found under paragraph 149 (b) of the Framework.
- 4.15 Most Council’s consider a horse riding arena to constitute an engineering operation as permitted by paragraph 150(b), subject to it satisfying the tests of the effect on openness.



- 4.16 As can be seen above the arena will be located behind an existing drystone wall. The scale of the arena is not significant and it would fit in with the gentle slope of the land and would not be prominent or harmful to the open landscape.
- 4.17 Overall, the horse riding arena, whether as a new building or as operational development, would meet the recognised provisions for exceptional forms of development in the Green Belt as set in paragraphs 149 and 150 of the Framework and would not amount to inappropriate development.

Public Right of Way



- 4.18 A public right of way exists directly to the north of the arena (RocBF9). The development is adjacent to the footpath but results in no impact on the right of way.

Very Special Circumstances

- 4.19 The Framework indicates that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The arena has been designed to have limited impact on the openness or character of the Green Belt and would result in appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation or constitute engineering operations that causes limited impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The development therefore is one of the exceptions given in paragraph 149(b) or 150(b) of the Framework and it is therefore not necessary to assess whether very special circumstances exist to outweigh the harm.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 In terms of the Framework, an arena would be an appropriate facility for outdoor sport and recreation in the Green Belt or be an engineering operation that causes limited visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt. In terms of openness the visual impact of the arena has been minimised. The arena will allow greater opportunities to exist for outdoor sport and recreation. The development is therefore considered to result in an exception to Green Belt policy and fully accords with the exceptions outline in paragraphs 149 and 150 of the Framework.