

Batcheller Monkhouse



Planning Design and Access Statement

Change of Use of existing stables to offices (Class E(g)) in
association with existing Equine operations at

Beckley Stud
Reeds Lane
Southwater
RH13 9DQ

On Behalf of
Equine America

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement is prepared on behalf of Equine America in support of a planning application for the following:

Change of Use of existing stables to offices (Class E(g)) in association with existing Equine operations at Beckley Stud, Reeds Road, Southwater.

1.2 This Planning Statement sets out the relevant background to assist the planning authority in its determination of the planning application.

1.3 The statement includes a description of the site and its surroundings, relevant planning history, details of the proposed development, a summary of the planning policy context, and an appraisal of the scheme against all relevant planning considerations.

- The application is supported by the following documents and plans:
- Application form and ownership certificate
- CIL forms
- Site Location Plan
- Block Plan
- Proposed Plans and elevations; and
- Water Neutrality Statement

2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

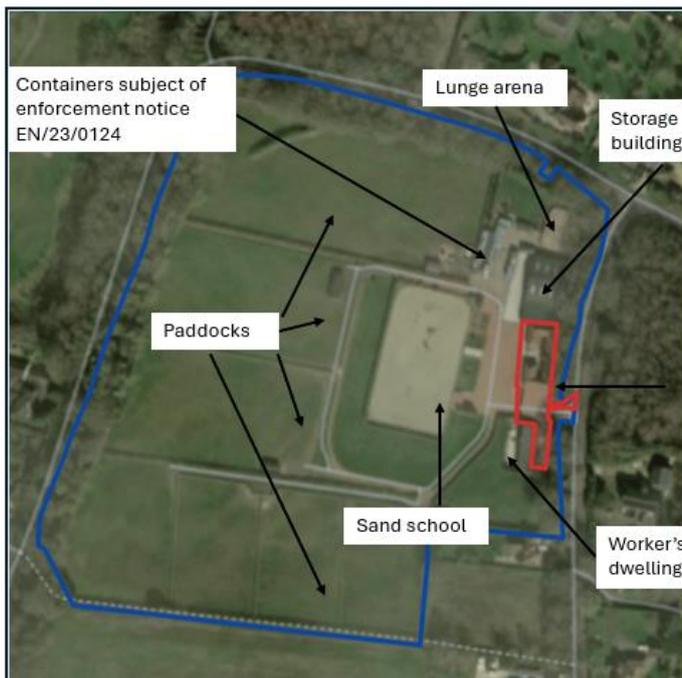
2.1 Application Site

- 2.1.1 The site is located close to the settlement of Southwater (approximately 0.4km away on the opposite side of the A24). Whilst there is a cluster of development at and around Beckley Stud, the site is located outside of a defined settlement boundary and therefore is located within the countryside.
- 2.1.2 The site is comprised of a brick / timber clad built 10 box stable building, court yard and parking area that are part of Beckley Stud equestrian holding. The stables were approved under Horsham planning reference DC/19/0278 (06/08/19), and from here on in are identified as 'the Site'.
- 2.1.3 Beckley Stud is comprised of approximately 11 acres of land. There is a residential use in the form of a mobile home which is conditioned to be occupied by a person solely or mainly working in association with the equestrian use at Beckley Stud. The wider site comprises paddocks, a sand school, lunge arena, the mobile home and a dark green coloured, steel clad building with lean-to which has a lawful use for the storage and distribution of Equine America (EA) UK products (primarily nutritional supplements for horses).
- 2.1.4 To the north of the site lie a number of residential buildings, Kings Farm and Equine Sports Vets. To the east of the site beyond Reeds Lane lies Newfoundout Copse. Additional riding paddocks are located to the south outside of the ownership of the applicant. Residential dwellings off Kings Lane are positioned to the south-west.
- 2.1.5 The wider site is therefore a mix of rural / equestrian and residential. Figure 2.1 shows a location plan of the site. Figure 2.2 shows an aerial map of the site with an indication of the use of the buildings and land within the site.

Figure 2.1 – Location Plan



Figure 2.2 – Aerial Plan



2.1.6 The application site comprises an area of hardstanding adjacent to a lawful storage building, stables and sand school that form part of the equine enterprise. The site is accessed directly off the main access leading directly to Reeds Lane to the east.

2.2 Site Photographs

2.2.1 Appendix A shows recent photographs of the site (taken in May 2025). The stables and hard standing are shown in figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 – Site photographs of existing stables and hard standing



2.3 **Background**

2.3.1 The applicant is Mr. Lee Middleton, who is the owner of Equine America. Mr. Middleton owns a number of horses and Beckley Stud has focused on the breeding and training of exceptional competition horses (racing, show jumping and dressage) along with box rest and racehorse recuperation.

2.3.2 Beckley Stud was first established to develop a successful breeding program to produce elite homebred British sports horses. It has a longstanding working relationship with The Billy Stud, a local stud farm. Alongside the breeding, training, and rearing of horses at Beckley Stud, Mr Middleton runs Equine America (EA). Beckley Stud continues to operate as a breeding facility working in partnership with the Billy Stud.

2.3.3 Beckley Stud provides EA with a bespoke research and development facility to test and improve their equine nutrition products. Beckley Stud continues to be a working equestrian facility complete with stables, sand school, and fields. It is home to a variety of horses, ponies and foals which compete and train across multiple 4 disciplines, which makes it ideally situated to trial new supplements and optimises existing products to ensure that EA supplies high quality equine products to the industry.

2.4 **Access**

2.4.1 The site is located off Reeds Lane. The access leads directly into the site, which has a made track with parking area that leads directly to the stables, storage building and around the sand school.

2.5 **Environmental and Heritage Designations**

2.5.1 The site lies within Flood Zone 1, and outside an area of flood risk. Therefore, a flood risk assessment is not required. The site lies outside of the National Park, or any locally designated sites and is therefore within the Countryside. It lies within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone. Kings Farm House is the nearest Listed building, which lies some 65m to the north of the application site. Newfoundout East is some 200m south east of the application site. Both are Grade II Listed residential dwellings. There are no other constraints on site.

2.6 Planning History

2.6.1 A review of Horsham District Council's online planning records has been undertaken for the site. The most recent, DC/22/0388, relates to the storage building that was allowed at appeal. The Decision Notice for the appeal is attached in **Appendix B**.

| Reference | Description | Decision |
|--------------|---|--|
| DC/22/0388 | Retention of existing green steel-clad building and mono-pitch lean-to for storage and distribution use by Equine America UK and resulting mixed use of Beckley Stud as a whole for equestrian, residential and commercial purposes | Application Refused Wed 15 Mar 2023 Appeal Allowed 7 th May 2025 |
| DISC/20/0278 | Application for approval of details reserved by condition 2 on DC/20/0615 | Application Permitted Thu 03 Dec 2020 |
| DC/20/0755 | To confirm the works of boundary fencing, brick piers and gate benefited from the General Permitted Development Order (Certificate of Lawful Development - Existing) | Split Decision All lawful except for the brick piers Wed 04 Nov 2020 |
| DC/20/0615 | Retention of bund | Application Permitted Wed 05 Aug 2020 |
| DC/20/0613 | Retention and completion of horse walker with barn shelter and adjacent turnout pen | Application Permitted Wed 05 Aug 2020 |
| DC/19/0278 | Demolition of existing stable and erection of stables | Application Permitted Fri 09 Nov 2018 |
| DC/18/1826 | Erection of a 60m x 30m sand school | Application Permitted Fri 09 Nov 2018 |
| DC/18/1622 | Removal of existing mobile home and positioning of new mobile home. Construction of 1.8m fencing along eastern/southern boundaries along with brick pillars and gates to entrance (retrospective). Proposed construction of 1.5m high fence along eastern/northern boundaries | Application Permitted Mon 17 Feb 2020 |

| Reference | Description | Decision |
|--------------|--|--|
| DISC/18/0186 | Approval of details reserved by condition 11 on DC/17/2048 | Application Permitted Fri 09 Nov 2018 |
| DISC/18/0158 | Approval of details reserved by condition 10 on DC/17/2048 | Application Permitted Wed 08 Aug 2018 |
| DC/17/2048 | Proposed change of use of existing equestrian facilities to combined equestrian | DC/17/2048 Thu 08 Mar 2018 |
| DISC/17/0348 | Approval of details reserved by condition 4 on DC/16/1069 | Application Permitted Thu 02 Nov 2017 |
| DC/16/1069 | Retrospective application for the erection of 4 stable blocks forming 10 stables and creation of hard standing | Application Permitted Wed 27 Jul 2016 |
| DC/14/2407 | Proposed creation of a small scale private equestrian yard - Five stables and sand school, revised application further to DC/14/1645 | Application Refused Mon 20 Apr 2015 |
| DC/14/1645 | Erection of stable building comprising 8 stables and 2 foaling boxes, feed hay and tack rooms with wash down and store areas and a sand school for private use | Application Refused Mon 06 Oct 2014 |

3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Proposal

3.1.1 It is proposed to change the use of the existing stables to provide office accommodation (Use Class E(g)(i)) in direct support of the continuing equine enterprise on site. The proposal does not seek to introduce a new planning unit or an unrelated commercial use but to facilitate the more efficient operation of the existing stud and equestrian activities.

3.1.2 It is essential to note that the continued equine use of the land and buildings is required and guaranteed, in accordance with a legal covenant that restricts the use of the site to equine purposes. The proposed office accommodation will remain functionally and operationally linked to the equestrian use and managed by the same operator.

3.1.3 The applicant does not intend to extend the buildings but to work within the existing built envelope. The offices would serve the employees of Equine America which currently operates as a breeding and training facility for exceptional competition horses, and as a research, and distribution facility for Equine America products. The operations at the site have evolved in recent years, whereby fewer horses are kept permanently on the site, and are housed at the applicant's other site at Brookhurst Grange, Holmbury Road, Cranleigh, Surrey, GU6 7SJ. There are currently up to 10 horses kept on site, and these are kept within the field shelters on the wider land. As such the 10 boxes that form the stables are surplus to requirements and a more appropriate use is required that would allow the continued growth of the established Equine America enterprise.

3.2 Appearance and Layout

As noted, the proposed change of use would utilize the existing built form without needing to extend. Any internal works will retain the existing structure and fabric, converting stable bays into enclosed office spaces with appropriate services.

3.2.1 The building would be of the following dimensions:

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Width | 28.6m |
| Depth | 14.4m |
| Height to eaves | 2.4m |
| Height to Ridge | 4.5m |
| Gross External Area including roof overhang (GEA) | 329.7m ² |
| Gross Internal Area (GIA) | 216.4m ² |

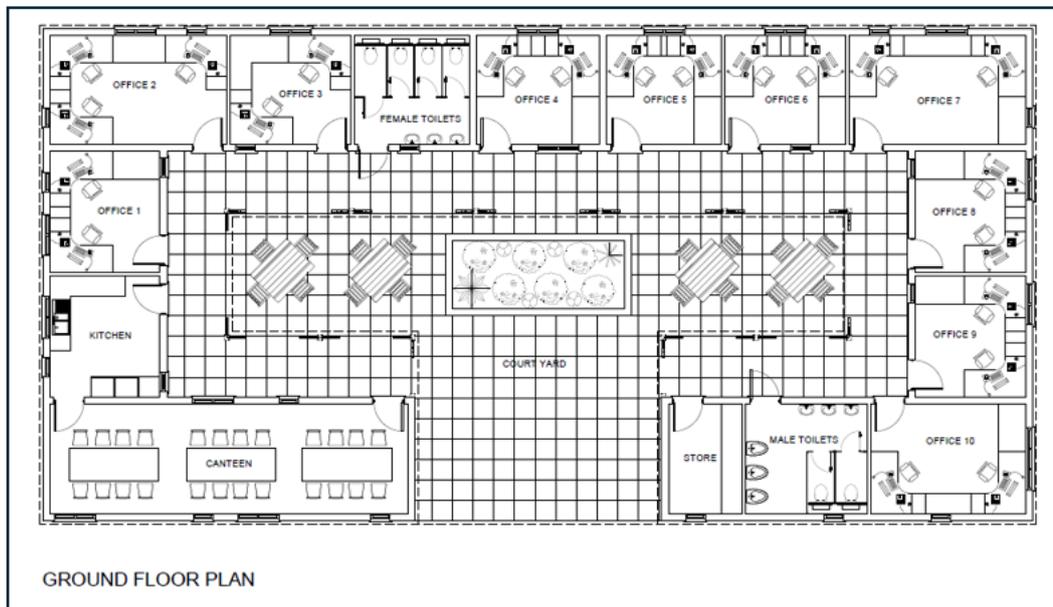
Figure 3.1 – Existing elevations and plans



Figure 3.2 – Proposed elevations



Figure 3.3 – Proposed floor plans



3.3 Access and Parking

3.3.1 There would be no change to the access on site. Parking would be provided in the existing parking area. Vehicles would access the site to the east via Reeds Lane. There is good visibility to the north and south for exiting drivers to see oncoming traffic.

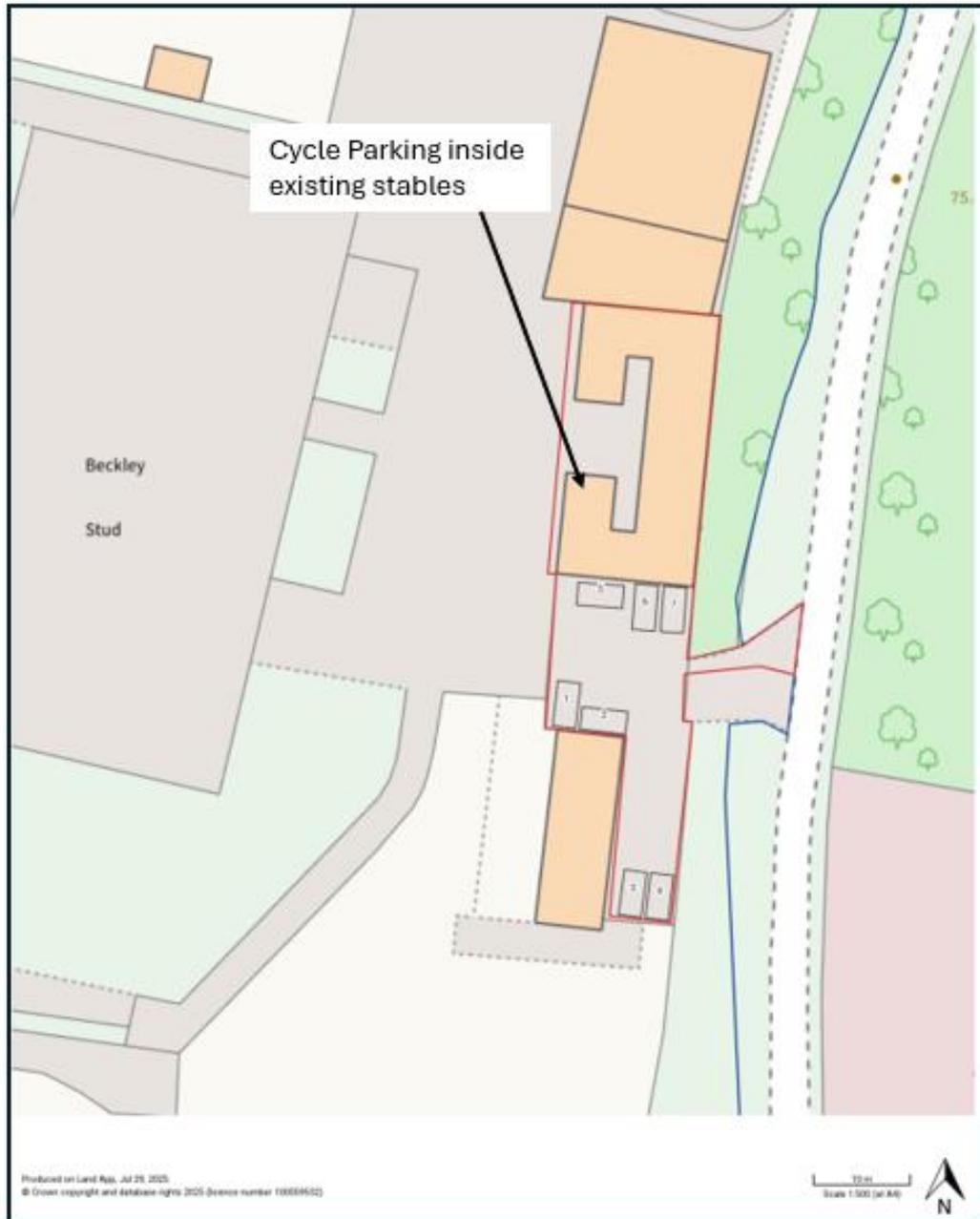
3.3.2 The West Sussex Guidance on Parking (2020) confirms that the following car parking spaces are required:

| Use Class | Vehicular Parking | Cycle Parking |
|---|-------------------|--|
| E Commercial, Business and Service – Business (office, research and development and light industrial process) | 1 space per 30sqm | 1 space per 150sqm for staff and 1 space per 500sqm for visitors |

3.3.3 Given the floor space of 216.4m², 7 car parking spaces would need to be accommodated on site.

3.3.4 The site can comfortably accommodate this requirement in the existing parking area. Figure 3.3 below displays the proposed parking arrangement, with 7 spaces in the existing parking area.

Figure 3.4 – Parking / Cycle Plan



3.3.5 In accordance with the West Sussex County Council Guidance on Parking at New Developments (2020), cycle parking will be provided to meet the operational needs of the proposed office use.

3.3.6 Provision is made for:

- 2 secure staff cycle parking spaces (long-stay), and
- 1 visitor cycle parking space (short stay),

based on the expected number of staff and visitors associated with the continued equine operations and ancillary office use.

3.3.7 Cycle parking will be designed in full compliance with the standards set out in the West Sussex Cycling Design Guide (2019) and Local Transport Note 1/20 (Cycle Infrastructure Design, DfT 2020). Specifically:

- Sheffield-style stands will be used;
- Each cycle stand will provide space for 2 bicycles;
- A minimum of 1.0 metre spacing between stands will be maintained;
- A minimum 0.6 metre clearance to walls or obstructions will be provided;

3.3.8 At least 1.0 metre of unobstructed access space will be maintained in front of the stands;

3.3.9 Staff and visitor cycle parking will be located in a secure, covered area, near the office entrance as shown in figure 3.4

3.3.10 These measures ensure that the proposal promotes sustainable travel, complies with local policy, and provides safe and accessible facilities for cyclists in line with best practice guidance.

4 PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the provisions of the statutory Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 In this instance the Development Plan comprises the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and Southwater Neighbourhood Plan (2021). The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration.
- 4.3 Horsham Local Plan is in the process of being reviewed. The Council formally submitted the Horsham District Local Plan 2023–2040 to the Secretary of State on 26 July 2024 for independent examination. Examination hearings began in December 2024 but were paused after just a few days by the Inspector due to concerns about soundness, meeting housing needs, sustainability appraisal, and duty to co-operate compliance. As such the Adopted plan remains the old HDPF (2015) until adoption of the new plan.
- 4.4 Whilst limited weight can be attached to the draft Local Plan, it does provide an indication of the future direction of policy and has therefore been considered below.

Development Plan

- 4.5 The Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) provides both the strategic and development focused policies for the District.
- 4.6 The accompanying Policies map shows the site located within the Countryside outside the Built-Up Area Boundary. Countryside policies therefore apply, specifically Policy 10, 26 and 27.
- 4.7 Policy 10 relates to rural economic development and states that sustainable rural economic development and enterprise within the district will be encouraged in order to provide economic, social and environmental benefits for local communities. Development that maintains the quality and character of the area whilst sustaining its varied and productive social and economic activity will be supported in principle.

- 4.8 In particular, part 1a) of the Policy states that development should *'be contained wherever possible within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion or, in the case of an established rural industrial estate, within the existing boundaries of the estate.'*
- 4.9 Any development should be appropriate to the countryside location and (inter alia) must contribute to the wider rural economy. New buildings in the rural area will be acceptable, provided that it supports sustainable economic growth and has considered the use of existing buildings beforehand.
- 4.10 Policy 26 states that outside built-up area boundaries, the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development. Any proposal must be essential to its countryside location and (among others) enable the sustainable development of rural areas. Proposals must be of a scale appropriate to their character and location and should not lead to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside. It should also protect, conserve and/or enhance the key features and characteristics of the local landscape character.
- 4.11 Policy 27 seeks to prevent settlement coalescence and will resist new development unless it can be demonstrated that:
- i. There is no significant reduction in the openness and 'break' between settlements
 - ii. It does not generate urbanizing effects within the settlement gap, including artificial lighting, development along key road corridors, and traffic movements.
 - iii. It contributes to the conservation, enhancement and amenity of the countryside, including where appropriate enhancements to the Green Infrastructure network
- 4.12 Other policies of relevance to the proposal are shown in table 4.1:

Table 4.1 – Development Plan Policies

| Policy | Title |
|---|---|
| Policy 7 Economic Growth | Sustainable employment development in Horsham district for the period up to 2031 will be achieved by (inter alia) identifying additional employment areas to meet the need for appropriate new business activity. |
| Policy 9 Employment Development | States that the provision of small, start-up and move-on business units will be supported to enable them to reach their fullest potential. |
| Policy 24 Environmental Protection | The high quality of the district's environment will be protected through the planning process. Developments will be expected to minimize exposure to and the emission of pollutants including noise, odour, air, and light pollution. |
| Policy 25 Landscape Character | The council will support developments that protect, conserve, and enhance the landscape and townscape character. |
| Policy 29 Equestrian Development | Supports equestrian related development where it is appropriate in scale and in keeping with the countryside character |
| Policy 33 Development Principles | Requires proposals to be appropriately located and to protect amenity and the environment. |
| Policy 36 Appropriate Energy Use | All applications for commercial development must include an Energy Statement demonstrating and quantifying how the development will comply with the Energy Hierarchy. |

Emerging Local Plan

- 4.13 Draft Policy 8 states that outside of built-up areas, economic development that maintains the quality and character of the area whilst sustaining its varied and productive social and economic activity, will be supported in principle.
- 4.14 Any development should be appropriate to the countryside location and will be supported provided that it does not prejudice a farming enterprise; contributes to the sustainable custodianship of the countryside; or contributes to the wider rural economy. As first preference, proposals should be contained within existing buildings or where this is not feasible proposals for new buildings will be supported where it contributes to sustainable rural economic growth.
- 4.15 Further, draft Policy 28 states that the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development. Any proposal must be essential to and justify its countryside location, and must meet one of the following criteria;
- a. Support the needs of agriculture or forestry
 - b. Enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;
 - c. Provide for quiet informal recreational use; or
 - d. Enable the sustainable development of rural areas.
- 4.16 The proposed office use is considered to comply with the aims of these policies by supporting the continued viability and efficiency of the existing rural equestrian enterprise, reusing existing buildings without visual or environmental harm.

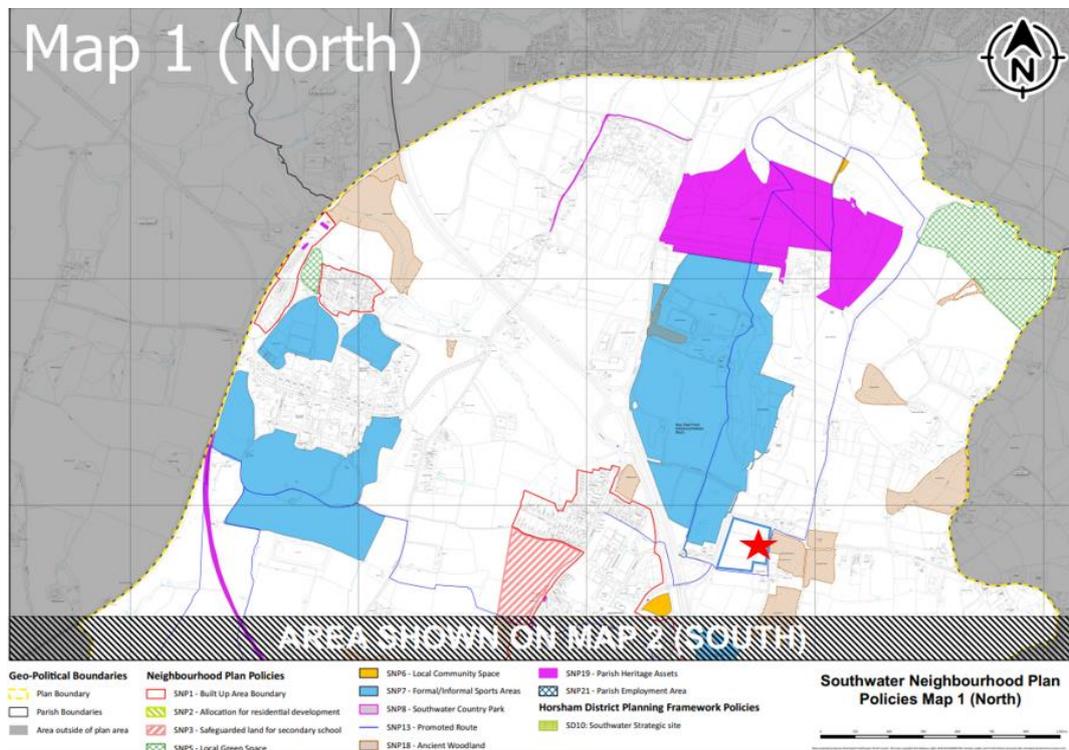
Neighbourhood plan

- 4.16 The site lies within the Parish of Southwater. Southwater Parish Neighbourhood Plan (SNP) was adopted on 23rd June 2021. The following Policies are relevant to this application:

| Policy | Summary |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Policy SNP1 Core Principles | Encourages development to take into account existing and proposed facilities, infrastructure, and resources. |
| Policy SNP16 Design | Encourages development of a high quality design |
| SNP21 A Growing Economy | Supports small scale business units where they are in accordance with the development plan |

4.15 The SNP map is shown below in figure 4.1 with the location of Beckley Stud indicated by the red star.

Figure 4.1 – Southwater Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map



Material Considerations

The NPPF (2024)

- 4.16 The presumption in favour of sustainable development seeks to balance the environmental, social and economic impacts of the planning system and enabling net gains where possible.
- 4.17 Section 6 seeks to build a strong and competitive economy. Paragraph 85 states that “Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity”.
- 4.18 Paragraph 88 supports a prosperous rural economy stating that planning policies and decisions should enable the following:
- a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
 - b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses;
 - c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and
 - d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.”
- 4.19 Paragraph 89 recognizes that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable. The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

- 4.20 Paragraph 124 states that Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed or 'brownfield' land.

Natural England's Position Statement (2021)

- 4.23 Natural England published a Position Statement in September 2021 raising concerns about the impact of increased water demand from new development on the protected environmental sites in the Arun Valley. It has subsequently been necessary to demonstrate that any new development proposed is 'water neutral' before it can be supported. Water neutrality means that water use is the same, or less, than the existing site.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.24 In advance of the production of a new Local Plan and prior to the statutory biodiversity net gain requirements coming into force, the Council has produced the Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Planning Advice Note which will be a material consideration when determining planning applications. It sets out clear expectations and a transparent approach with regard to how applicants are to demonstrate compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirement for 'measurable net gains for biodiversity'. It also sets out a 'get ready approach' for the emerging statutory requirements, expected to be in place November 2023, and promotes the provision of 10% biodiversity net gain within development. The Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Planning Advice Note was endorsed at Full Council on 19 October 2022.

5 PLANNING APPRAISAL

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The considerations of relevance in the determination of the application are as follows:

- Principle of the proposal
- Impact on the countryside
- Traffic, Access, and Parking
- Impact on Amenity
- Water neutrality
- Ecology and Biodiversity net gain

5.1.2 These have been discussed in turn below

5.2 Principle of the Proposal

5.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework states in paragraph 85 that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. It goes on to note in paragraph 86 that planning policies should be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices, and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

5.2.2 More specifically, paragraph 87 states that planning decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors, and this includes making provision for the expansion or modernisation of other industries of local, regional, or national importance to support economic growth and resilience.

- 5.5.1 Paragraph 89 states that planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable. The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.
- 5.5.2 This paragraph is considered to be particularly relevant to Horsham District, being a primarily rural local authority. The North-West Sussex Employment Growth Appraisal undertaken for the Local Plan Review, and therefore most up to date for the purposes of identifying key trends and demand, describes Horsham District as having a largely rural character where 32.7% of businesses are located outside of settlement boundaries, compared to 23.5% in Mid Sussex and a primarily urban based employers in Crawley. More specifically, it notes a very high proportion of micro businesses - 90.5% - which is higher than regional and national levels, with small scale businesses making up 8.1% of business.
- 5.5.3 The equine business remains active and requires modern administrative facilities to support breeding, client relations, event management, product research and veterinary coordination. Providing dedicated office space on-site improves operational efficiency, business resilience, and staff welfare.
- 5.5.4 It is therefore considered that the proposal comprises sustainable development having regard to the three objectives advocated within the NPPF namely;
- An Economic Role: The proposal strengthens the long-term viability of the established equine business by supporting the operational efficiency and growth of an existing rural equestrian business, contributing to the rural economy in line with national and local policy support for rural enterprises.
 - A Social Role: The retention and expansion of a viable rural business helps avoid redundancy and dereliction, contributing to a positive social environment. In addition, the use would be maintained as equestrian, aligning with local identity and tradition, preserving the social fabric of the area.

- An Environmental Role: The proposed building is sited adjacent to existing built form, avoiding encroachment into open countryside and minimising landscape harm. It is of a modest scale, uses materials appropriate to its setting, and is visually assimilated into the rural character.

5.5.5 In light of the above context, the application proposal can be assessed against the adopted policies of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan whilst also acknowledging that further support has been given through national policy for rural commercial development.

5.5.6 As a consequence of the above, and to the advice given within the NPPF, it is considered that a presumption in favour of approval applies to the proposals.

5.6 **Impact on the Countryside**

5.6.1 The application site is located within the rural area of Horsham District, outside of any defined settlement boundary. As such, careful consideration has been given to the potential impact of the proposed building on the countryside, in accordance with the development plan and national planning policy.

5.6.2 The proposed change of use of the existing stables building to offices building would result in no change to the existing built form on site. The building is located adjacent to existing built form and areas of hardstanding. This siting ensures that the building is well-related to the existing developed envelope of the site and does not appear as isolated or intrusive development within the open countryside.

5.6.3 The building is of modern design with a modest and functional scale, appropriate to its rural purpose, and utilises materials consistent with existing structures on site. The visual impact is therefore limited, and the building is capable of being absorbed into the wider landscape with minimal effect on openness or rural character.

5.6.4 A combination of existing hedgerows and trees on the northern and eastern borders further reduces the building's visibility in longer-range views, and additional landscaping can be provided if necessary to reinforce this containment.

- 5.6.5 The proposal also complies with Policy 10 (Rural Economic Development) of the Horsham District Planning Framework, which supports proposals that enable the sustainable growth and expansion of rural businesses, including the re-use of existing buildings. The proposed offices will be directly related to an established equine enterprise and is necessary for the efficient operation and expansion of the rural business. It is located adjacent to existing buildings and hardstanding, ensuring that it integrates well with the existing built form and does not intrude upon the open countryside.
- 5.6.6 In line with Policy 10, the development supports the rural economy, respects the character of the countryside, and is proportionate to the scale and nature of the enterprise it serves. The proposal therefore aligns with both the strategic aims of Policy 10 and national guidance in the NPPF (2024), which encourages sustainable rural development that contributes to the vitality of the countryside (para. 88–89).
- 5.6.7 The development is considered to accord with Policy 25, as it conserves the character of the surrounding landscape and does not result in harm to identified landscape features. It meets the requirements of Policy 26, as the building is essential to the operation of an established rural business, is appropriately sited and designed, and avoids adverse impact on the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
- 5.6.8 Importantly, the proposal does not contribute to settlement coalescence, nor does it erode the identity or openness between settlements. It therefore complies with Policy 27.
- 5.6.9 At the national level, the proposal aligns with the NPPF in recognising and respecting the intrinsic character of the countryside, while supporting the sustainable growth of a rural business. The location of the building adjacent to existing development ensures that it is sympathetic to the surrounding built and natural environment, in accordance with paragraph 182.
- 5.6.10 The existing stables are of permanent and substantial construction. Only modest alterations and upgrades to the building are considered necessary to accommodate the new use. The footprint, bulk, scale, and mass would remain

unchanged. The materials applied would be typical of those used in modern office buildings.

5.6.11 The stables have their own presence within the rural landscape and are considered not to detract from the local character. The building will continue to be screened from the main road by the established boundary coverage already on site to the east of the plot.

5.6.12 The proposed use would not change the appearance of the surrounding land. It would therefore not result in an urbanising appearance to the surrounding area in line with Policy 27.

5.6.13 It is therefore deemed that the proposal meets the policies regarding development within the Countryside.

5.7 **Traffic, Access, and Parking**

5.7.1 The application site is accessed Reeds Lane and the intended use of the new building is an office space relating to the existing use. The anticipated increase in traffic movements would have a negligible impact on the safety and operation of the local highway network.

5.7.2 The proposed development would not give rise to any adverse impacts on the local highway network or site access arrangements. The proposal does not involve the creation of a new access or intensification of a sensitive or unsuitable junction, and visibility from the access is considered to be acceptable.

5.7.3 The proposal would not result in a material increase in vehicle movements to or from the site over and above the existing baseline. Any trips generated would be limited to those already associated with the operation of the business.

5.7.4 Parking provision is included within the site in accordance with the West Sussex County Council Parking Standards and Transport Assessment Guidance (2020), ensuring that the development is appropriately serviced and does not lead to overspill onto local roads or create highway safety concerns.

5.7.5 Given the limited scale and operational nature of the proposal, a formal Transport Statement is not considered necessary, and the development is compliant with Paragraph 116 of the NPPF (2024), which states that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. In this case, no such impacts arise.

5.7.6 The residual cumulative impacts of the proposal will not be severe on the local highway network, and therefore under the guidance of the National Planning Policy Framework, planning permission should not be resisted or refused on traffic and transport grounds.

5.8 **Amenity**

5.8.1 The nearest residential dwelling is the rural workers dwelling to the south of the application site, which is owned by the applicant. There are residential properties located close to the site on Coltstaple Lane and Reeds Lane, and therefore the area remains a noise sensitive environment in which the potential for and effect of any additional noise and disturbance must be carefully considered.

5.8.2 It is considered that the conversion of the stabling to office use will not result in any material harm to the amenity of neighbouring residential properties in terms of noise, disturbance, or general activity.

5.8.3 The proposed change of use of the existing stable buildings to office accommodation will not result in any material harm to the amenity of neighbouring residential properties in terms of noise, disturbance, or general activity on the basis that:

- **No intensification of use:** The office use is modest in scale and solely in support of the established equestrian business. It does not introduce a new or independent planning unit and will not generate levels of activity beyond those already associated with the lawful use of the site.
- **No external operational changes:** There are no proposed alterations to the external envelope of the buildings and no additional structures, equipment, or harmful lighting that could give rise to noise, light spill, or visual intrusion.

- **Limited additional vehicle movements:** The proposed office use will accommodate a small number of staff already associated with the equine operations. Any marginal increase in vehicular activity (if any) will be negligible compared to the historic use of the site when more horses were kept permanently and managed on-site.
- **Retained rural and equine character:** The activity remains low-key and consistent with the site's historic equine use. Office-related operations (such as administration, coordination, and client correspondence) are inherently low-noise in nature and take place during normal working hours.
- **Separation distance and screening:** The proposed offices are located at a reasonable distance from the nearest residential properties, with, building, boundary planting and intervening land uses (e.g. paddocks, access tracks) providing a natural buffer. This physical separation will prevent any perceptible increase in noise or disturbance.
- **No impact on residential outlook or privacy:** As the use is internal and at ground floor level, there will be no new opportunities for overlooking or loss of privacy for nearby dwellings.

5.8.4 In light of the above, it is concluded that the proposed change of use will not result in harm to the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers, and fully accords with Policy 33 (Development Principles) of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), which requires that developments do not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of nearby users and residents.

5.9 Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

5.9.1 No separate Ecology Report or Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment has been submitted with this application, as neither is considered necessary in this case, for the following reasons:

- No physical works to the external building fabric or land are proposed as part of the change of use. The development is confined to the internal conversion of existing stable bays to office accommodation, with no demolition, excavation, or alteration to the roof, walls, or footprint of the building.

- No loss of greenfield land or existing habitats is proposed. The land surrounding the stable buildings, including paddocks, pasture, and hedgerows, will remain entirely unaffected. There is no encroachment into undeveloped land or areas of ecological interest.
- The stable buildings are already in active equine use, and have been so for a number of years. There is no evidence or reason to suspect the presence of protected species within the buildings, which are regularly accessed by people and horses, and offer no suitable habitat features for roosting bats or nesting birds.
- The site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory ecological designation, nor is it located within or adjacent to a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local Wildlife Site, or ancient woodland.

5.9.2 The proposal therefore does not trigger the biodiversity net gain requirement under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as introduced by the Environment Act 2021, because the application is for a change of use with no development that would not affect the condition or baseline value of the site.

5.9.3 The proposals fall within the scope of exemptions from mandatory BNG (as per the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024), particularly for changes of use that do not result in habitat loss or degradation.

5.9.4 In light of the above, the proposal is considered to have no reasonable likelihood of significant adverse impacts on biodiversity, in accordance with paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) and therefore does not require further ecological information or a formal BNG metric assessment.

5.9.5 The development is entirely consistent with Policy 31 (Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity) of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), which seeks to ensure that development maintains and enhances existing biodiversity where appropriate.

5.10 **Water Neutrality**

5.10.1 The application is supported by a water calculation report that demonstrates that the proposal will be water neutral and will not affect the integrity of the Arun Valley

protected sites in accordance with guidance as provided within the Natural England Position Statement (2021).

- 5.10.2 The proposed change of use of the stable building to office accommodation will result in the relocation of 10 horses currently stabled on-site to the applicant's alternative facility located outside the Sussex North supply zone. This relocation achieves a baseline saving of approximately 144,175 litres of water per year based on average daily water consumption per horse.
- 5.10.3 The projected water usage associated with the proposed office use is estimated at 346,750 litres per annum based on standard employee usage figures. The residual water demand (202,575 litres) will be fully offset through the installation of a rainwater harvesting system connected to the building's 344 sqm roof, which is capable of capturing approximately 298,592 litres of water annually.
- 5.10.4 Following implementation of these measures, the proposal results in a net reduction of 9,000 litres per year in water consumption, thereby fully meeting the test of water neutrality and ensuring no additional pressure is placed on the Sussex North supply area.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the change of use of existing stables to offices (Class E(g)) in association with existing Equine operations at Beckley Stud, Southwater.
- 6.2 The proposal retains the site's lawful equine use with the office use being ancillary to the ongoing equine business. This ensures no change in the primary character of the land.
- 6.3 The conversion of underused stables into offices supports sustainable rural economic diversification, in line with national and local policy objectives (NPPF para 88, HDPF Policies 10 and 26).
- 6.4 There are only modest external alterations proposed to the buildings and none to the wider site. The development preserves the rural character, appearance, and landscape setting of the area.
- 6.5 The proposed office use is low-intensity and will not generate harmful levels of noise, traffic, or disturbance to neighbouring properties. It is entirely compatible with surrounding uses.
- 6.6 The use of existing access arrangements and the provision of parking and cycle storage ensures that the proposal will not lead to any highway safety or capacity concerns.
- 6.7 The development is exempt from the need for BNG under current regulations
- 6.8 A detailed Water Neutrality Statement demonstrates that the proposal will achieve full water neutrality through a combination of baseline savings from relocated horses and on-site rainwater harvesting.

6.9 In conclusion, the proposed change of use of the stable building to office accommodation at Beckley Stud represents a sustainable and policy-compliant form of rural diversification that supports the long-term viability of the equine enterprise. The proposal results in no visual, ecological, highway, or amenity harm, achieves water neutrality, and does not conflict with the existing lawful equestrian use. The development aligns with National and Local Planning Policy and should therefore be supported and granted planning permission.

Appendix A - Site Photos





Appendix B – Appeal Decision Notice (PINS ref: APP/Z3825/W/23/3324019)

(Separately Bound)