

Planning and Agricultural Justification Statement
For a temporary Rural Workers Dwelling and stables
to allow the site to be used for breeding horses
AT

Trickles Barn Farm,
(Land West of Trickles Wood)
Hole Street,
Ashington,
West Sussex, RH20 3DE.



The objective for rural business is to sustain a balanced outcome, a delicate relationship between productive activity which includes farming and rural enterprise and the conservation of the environment both historic and landscape needs to be maintained. The rural economy is a constantly changing paradigm and should be nurtured, supported and promoted because it forms the core of the nation.

Prepared For:
David and Karen Ockelford,
Trickles Barn Farm,
(Land West of Trickles Wood)
Hole Street,
Ashington,
West Sussex, RH20 3DE.

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Executive Summary

This planning application is submitted on behalf of David and Karen Ockelford to seek permission for the siting of a temporary rural worker's dwelling and new stables at Trickles Barn Farm. The proposed accommodation is essential for the functional operation of a growing equestrian and livestock business.

Trickles Barn Farm is developing over recent years into a viable and expanding rural enterprise, focusing on high-quality sport horse breeding, equine rest, training, and land-based activity including hay production and rare breed sheep farming.

The nature of the enterprise requires a full time on-site presence, primarily for the welfare and management of brood mares and foals, as well as for security and emergency response. This report demonstrates that the proposal meets the policy tests for rural worker accommodation under both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF).

Introduction

We are acting on behalf of David and Karen Ockelford, owners of Trickle Barn Farm, located on Hole Street, Ashington, RH20 3DE. This application seeks permission for a rural worker's dwelling at Trickle Barn Farm to support the expansion of Karen Ockelford's equine business. The proposed dwelling will provide essential on-site accommodation to enable Karen to care for her brood mares, manage horses under her training and rehabilitation care, and support the commercial use of the stables for breeding and the sale of foals.

Since acquiring the holding a couple of years ago, Karen and David have steadily developed the equestrian enterprise. A key focus moving forward is the establishment of a structured breeding programme, alongside the rest and care facility for horses.

As there is currently no residential accommodation on the site, this application seeks consent for temporary accommodation. This provision is vital to allow the applicants to live on-site, ensuring the welfare of the horses and enabling the continued growth and viability of the business, particularly in breeding high-quality sport horses.

Planning background

From the planning history is:

Prior notification for the creation of a new agricultural access track

Ref. No: DC/24/0921 | Status: Decided

Prior notification for the erection of a new agricultural storage barn.

Ref. No: DC/24/1862 | Status: Decided

Both applications have been approved and this new application for stables and temporary accommodation is just a natural extension to develop the farm business.

Site Context and Business Overview

Trickle Barn Farm is a rural holding located off Hole Street, in the parish of Ashington. The holding is surrounded by open countryside and comprises a mix of pastureland, stabling facilities, hay production fields, and basic equestrian infrastructure.

Over the last couple of years, the applicants have incrementally developed a business that includes:

- Breeding of high-quality sport horses from mares with exceptional pedigree;
- Training and rehabilitation of horses for competition and resale;
- Land-based activities such as hay production for both own use and limited sale;
- The rearing of rare breed sheep and associated livestock for land management and companion purposes.

The enterprise is run by Mrs. Ockelford with help from her husband David, Karen principally undertakes all horse care, breeding supervision, and stock management activities on-site.

Proposed Development

The proposal is for the siting of a modest, temporary timber cabin for a period of three years and stables. The dwelling will:

- Provide essential on-site accommodation for Mr and Mrs. Ockelford;
- Support the welfare and safety of horses, youngstock, and other livestock;
- Enable continued business expansion and sustainability;
- Secure the holding against theft, vandalism, or animal welfare risks.

The proposed development is proportionate to the needs of the enterprise and is reversible, in line with national policy guidance for temporary dwellings

Equestrian Use

The Applicant has worked with, owned and trained horses of all ages for over several years. Karen has 3 brood mares with exceptional pedigree so quality is key rather than quantity and would like to breed Sports horses for competition. It takes several years to produce good quality horses. The breeding mares need to be checked throughout the night and with all equine practices people need to be on hand on a twenty-four hour basis to be able to react immediately.

Agricultural Use

The Applicant produces hay off the ground which is kept for own use and also a small amount is sold on. Horses are also well known for the need of companionship and if one horse is removed it keeps them settled if other types of animals are retained on the site. The applicants have access to rent quite a lot of additional land from farms in the area.

Labour Requirement

On site accommodation for an equine worker is required for the follow basic operations:

Handling foals;

Closely monitoring foals for various common conditions (which if unnoticed can be fatal);

Bringing mares and foals in from fields when sudden onset of heavy rain (to prevent chilling and pneumonia);

Assisting farrier with foal and young stock hoof care;

Monitoring mares and young stock for behavioural changes (which may lead to acute illness if not diagnosed early);

Checking all stock late at night for any problems and shutting in if poor weather conditions;

Monitoring all stock for signs of colic;

Monitoring stabled horses for incidents of becoming cast;

Monitoring groups of mares and young stock for signs of bullying;

Changing and dressings and flushing wounds where necessary;

Grassland management operations such as harrowing, rolling, topping and fertiliser spreading; and

General maintenance duties.

Overseeing events and the competitors horse requirements.

Functional Need

Potentially the applicant could have ten horses on site during the summer months. By reference to Andersons Equine Business Guide and data from Warrick University, we calculate the standards man day requirements for labour on this units as follows:

3 brood mares:

3 X 605 Hours = 1,812
Less 25% = 453.75
Total Hours = 1,358.25 divided by 2,225 = 0.61 Full time

3 other horses in residence

3 X 920 Hours = 2,760
Less 30% = 828
Total Hours = 1,932 divided by 2,225 = 0.868 Full time

Based on the above calculation for labour requirement on a six horse basis the actual full-time worker positions is 1.478 full time. This figure does not take into consideration the labour requirements of running and maintaining the fields, or looking after the other animals on the holding.

The rural business requires the owner to live on site at all times for the welfare of the stock, which includes the feeding, watering and checking the health of the animals and exercise. Much of this work could be at any time especially in an emergency.

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

The purpose of the planning system, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024), is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At its core, this means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

To deliver sustainable development, the planning system must pursue three overarching and interdependent objectives in a mutually supportive manner:

1. Economic Objective

To support a strong, responsive, and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in appropriate locations and at the right time. This includes facilitating investment in infrastructure, supporting productivity, and enabling innovation and sustainable economic growth.

2. Social Objective

To foster strong, vibrant, and healthy communities by ensuring a sufficient supply and variety of homes to meet present and future needs. This includes supporting the creation of

a high-quality built environment with accessible local services and open spaces that promote health, well-being, and social cohesion.

3. Environmental Objective

To protect and enhance the natural, built, and historic environment, making prudent use of natural resources, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy.

These objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of local plans and the application of planning policies, which must reflect local circumstances, including the character and opportunities of each area. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, ensuring that development proposals that align with the Framework are approved without delay.

Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

In rural areas, the NPPF places particular emphasis on supporting development that meets identified local needs and enhances the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies and decisions should:

- Be responsive to local circumstances and support rural housing that reflects community needs.
- Encourage the delivery of rural exception sites for affordable housing and allow for a proportion of market housing where it helps to facilitate viability.
- Promote housing in locations that sustain local services, particularly in villages and smaller settlements.
- Recognise that development in one village may support the services of nearby settlements, contributing to wider rural sustainability.

The development of isolated homes in the countryside should generally be avoided unless specific circumstances apply, including (but not limited to):

- The need for rural workers, including those with majority control of agricultural businesses, to live permanently at or near their workplace.
- Securing the future of heritage assets through enabling development or viable use.
- The reuse of redundant or disused buildings that enhance their immediate setting.
- The subdivision of existing dwellings.
- Designs of exceptional architectural quality, which significantly enhance their surroundings and reflect the character of the area.

Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy

The NPPF encourages planning decisions that enable the sustainable growth and diversification of the rural economy. In particular, policies should support:

- The growth and expansion of rural businesses, including through conversions and well-designed new buildings.
- The diversification of agricultural and land-based enterprises.
- Sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that respect the character of the countryside.

- The retention and development of local services and community facilities, such as shops, meeting places, recreational venues, and places of worship.

The NPPF also recognises that rural economic development may require sites to be located beyond settlement boundaries, or in areas not well served by public transport. In such cases, development must be sensitive to its setting, avoid adverse impacts on local infrastructure, and seek to enhance sustainability through improved walking, cycling, and public transport links. The use of previously developed land and sites well-related to existing settlements is encouraged.

Contribution of Trickle Barn Farm to the Rural Economy

The proposed development at Trickle Barn Farm aligns with the principles of sustainable rural development as set out in the NPPF 2024. It will generate direct and indirect economic benefits by engaging a wide range of local rural enterprises and services, including:

- Veterinary services
- Equine physiotherapy and dentistry
- Farriery
- Hay, straw, and bedding suppliers
- Local feed merchants and tack shops
- Rug cleaning and repair services
- Local builders and construction services
- Agricultural machinery suppliers and repairers
- Timber and building material merchants

The project will contribute to the ongoing vitality of the local rural economy, support employment across multiple rural trades, and encourage the retention and growth of essential services. Its sustainable design and land-based function demonstrate a clear alignment with both local development plan objectives and the overarching aims of the NPPF 2024

The Essential Need for On Site Accommodation

The functional need for a dwelling is principally determined by the scale and type of enterprises operated and the systems employed. A functional need is more likely to exist where circumstances requiring the prompt attention of a skilled worker could occur outside normal working hours and where they do not typically fall within a pre-determined routine.

The keeping, breeding and rearing of horses does in principle generate a functional need for the on-site residential presence of a skilled equine worker for an enterprise of this nature. The applicant has owned and worked with a significant number of horses over the years. Experience has proven that many emergency situations can occur which require immediate attention.

The NPPF is clear in terms of encouraging the development and diversification of land based businesses but cautions that in order to justify a new isolated dwelling the need for it must be essential and permanent. No guidance is provided within the NPPF as to the meaning or interpretation of 'permanent', however it is considered that for there to be a permanent need, the business enterprise which generates that need should be capable of being viable and have a reasonable prospect of being sustainable in the long term.

The primary test set out in the NPPF and Local Plan Policy 20 is an assessment as to whether it is essential for a rural worker to live at, or near, their place of work. In this case, the applicant considers it essential to live on site in order to provide for the management of the equine business and meet the welfare needs of the horses and other livestock on site.

There is a legal responsibility under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to ensure that all animals are kept in a manner which accords them freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition; appropriate comfort and shelter, the prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment of injury, disease or infestation; freedom from fear; and freedom to display most normal patterns of behaviour.

The issue of security is also now acknowledged to be an increasing problem in rural areas especially where third party horses or livestock are at risk from fire, trespass and vandalism – and such risks can only adequately be managed with on-site supervision.

The Animal Welfare Act also contains a Duty to Care to animals which means that anyone responsible for an animal must take reasonable steps to make sure the animal's needs and its welfare are met. This overall responsibility for Duty of Care for animal welfare for the horses stabled or at grass at Trickles Barn Farm lies with the applicant.

In 2005 the equestrian industry and welfare organisations produced revised guidelines on the welfare of all horses, ponies and donkeys (The Equine Industry Welfare Guidelines Compendium for Horse, Ponies and Donkeys produced by the National Equine Welfare Council). This refers to the availability of staff and states that: "Sufficient staff must be provided at all times to ensure proper, regular and timely attention to all horses held". This document has been updated with the Third Edition 2009 and with regard to 'Duty of Care' this notes:

"The most significant single influence on the welfare of the horse is the care and management given by the owner or keeper of that horse. They should be able to meet the welfare needs of their horse and be capable of safeguarding them under all foreseeable circumstances."

It has been demonstrated that there is an essential need for a resident equine worker to be onsite to ensure that the welfare of the horses on the holding is not compromised and to add to the security of the site which would also include the secure storage building used for the storage of forestry equipment.

The Role of Rural Accommodation in Sustaining the Industry

Housing for rural workers has traditionally been part of the agricultural and land-based economy. However, rising rural housing costs and the lack of availability now threaten the viability of smaller operations. The Horsham District Housing Strategy acknowledges the acute shortage of affordable housing in rural areas and the need to support those who live and work on the land.

Providing a modest, temporary, and purpose-specific dwelling on the holding:

- Ensures the continuity of animal care;
- Enables the business to scale up responsibly;
- Addresses a recognised housing shortfall in the district;
- Supports sustainable, home-based employment and self-sufficiency.

This application should be viewed in the context of rural resilience, local economic development, and animal welfare best practice.

UK Equine Industry – Key Facts and Insights

- The UK is globally recognised as a leader in the equine sector, with a reputation for excellence and expertise. The industry supports exports worth over £500 million, with particularly strong growth in Far Eastern markets.
- Contributing around £8 billion annually to the national economy, the UK equine sector is one of the largest rural industries—second only to agriculture. It encompasses approximately 1 million horses and generates £4.3 billion in gross output.
- 374,000 UK households currently own horses—a decline from 446,000 in 2015.
- British horse racing alone accounts for £3.45 billion in economic activity and contributes £276 million in tax revenue (2012 data).
- In 2010–2011, around 3.5 million people participated in horse riding, a figure likely enhanced by the London 2012 Olympics, which boosted interest in equestrian sports.
- Equestrian activities are among the most inclusive sports in the UK, with high participation from women, older adults (45+), and people with disabilities. Notably, nearly 40% of equestrian participants are not involved in any other form of physical activity. It is also one of the few Olympic sports where men and women compete equally, with elite riders aged between 18 and 70.
- Horse racing is the UK's second most attended sport, surpassed only by football.

Strategic Significance of the European Equine Industry

Economic Impact and Employment

The European equine industry encompasses racing, sport, breeding, and leisure. It contributes over €100 billion (£86.7 billion) in economic activity annually and sustains approximately 400,000 full-time equivalent jobs, with significantly more roles when including part-time and related occupations.

As a capital- and labour-intensive sector, it supports a wide range of professions, including breeders, trainers, veterinarians, farriers, transporters, and event organisers. In the UK alone, up to 270,000 jobs are linked to equine activity. Key regional hubs like Newmarket (UK) and Normandy (France) depend heavily on the industry for economic vitality. Governments benefit significantly from tax revenues tied to the sector—at least €5 billion (£4.34 billion) is collected annually through betting, taxation, and related expenditure.

Industry Segments and Rural Development

The equine sector is composed of four interconnected segments:

- 1. Racing**
 - Over 78,000 races take place across Europe each year.
 - Major spectator attendance and betting revenue (e.g., €4 billion in Ireland).
 - Drives bloodstock sales and attracts international investment.
- 2. Equestrian Sports**

- Over 10,000 FEI-approved events annually span Olympic and non-Olympic disciplines.
- In the UK, 3.2 million people engage in recreational riding, supporting demand for equipment, training, and competitions.

3. Breeding

- Europe is a global leader in Thoroughbred and sport horse breeding.
- Countries like Ireland, Germany, France, and the Netherlands house world-class breeding operations and studbooks (e.g., KWPN, Hanoverian, Selle Français).

4. Leisure and Tourism

- Leisure riding is the largest ownership segment (e.g., 66% in the UK).
- Riding schools, bridleways, and equestrian tourism bolster rural economies and encourage land-based diversification.

Infrastructure and International Trade

Europe hosts premier auction venues including Tattersalls (UK), Goffs (Ireland), and Arqana (France). Annual sales regularly reach into the hundreds of millions—e.g., the Tattersalls October Yearling Sale 2024 generated over €240 million (£208 million).

Digital platforms have expanded global access to European horses, particularly since the pandemic. Buyers from North America, Asia, and the Middle East routinely invest in European stock, reinforcing the continent's global standing in breeding and training.

Policy Integration and Public Support

The equine sector aligns closely with broader policy goals in rural development, environmental management, cultural preservation, and employment generation:

- Equine grazing and breeding are recognised under the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for supporting sustainable land use.
- Betting levies in countries like France and the UK are reinvested into the racing industry.
- Ireland offers targeted tax reliefs and strategic investments for equine infrastructure and breeding initiatives.

In 2017, the European Parliament formally acknowledged the equine industry's socio-economic value, calling for improved support in regulation, welfare, and environmental sustainability.

Planning Rationale for Equine Development

The economic, social, and environmental contributions of the equine industry offer a strong justification for planning approval and investment in equine infrastructure—including stud farms, training facilities, competition venues, and riding centres.

Such developments deliver:

- Job creation, particularly in rural communities.
- Tourism and leisure revenue, stimulating local businesses.
- Export and trade opportunities, bolstering national and regional economies.
- Sustainability benefits, through responsible land use and animal care.

Investing in the equine sector safeguards a key element of Europe’s cultural heritage and rural economy while delivering tangible, long-term returns—making it a valuable focus for strategic development

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF)

Policy 10: Rural Economic Development

This policy encourages development that:

- Contributes to the diverse and sustainable rural economy;
- Supports land-based enterprise;
- Demonstrates minimal environmental impact and a high standard of design.

The proposed dwelling directly supports an equestrian business which contributes to local employment, land use, and economic diversification.

Policy 20: Rural Workers Accommodation

Policy 20 supports new accommodation in the countryside for rural workers where a functional need is demonstrated and the business is viable. This application meets both criteria:

- Functional Need: The nature of equine breeding and foaling requires 24/7 monitoring.
- Viability: The enterprise has been established and is expanding, with evidence of investment, income, and potential for growth.

This application is for temporary accommodation and stables, in line with policy preferences for new rural worker dwellings.

Conclusion

The equine industry is not only a culturally significant and inclusive sport, but also a cornerstone of the rural economy, offering wide-ranging economic, social, and environmental benefits. Enterprises like Trickle's Barn Farm represent the modern evolution of rural businesses, blending traditional land use with high-value activity such as sport horse breeding and rehabilitation.

Granting planning permission for a temporary rural worker's dwelling will ensure that this enterprise can succeed, expand, and contribute meaningfully to the local and wider economy, while also ensuring the highest standards of animal care and site security.

This proposal is fully compliant with the NPPF, HDPF Policies 10 and 20, and broader rural development strategies. We respectfully request that the application be approved.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Business Plan