Planning Statement

Planning Application for the change of use of land as an enclosed canine exercise area

at

Broomlands Farm
Broadbridge Heath Road
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 3PA

On Behalf of
The Broadbridge Heath Trust

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report is submitted in support of a planning application for the use of land at Broomlands Farm as an enclosed canine exercise area.

1.2 This report provides information on the site and its surroundings, planning background and an appraisal against all relevant planning policies.

2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 Site Description

2.1.1 The site extends to approximately 1.90 hectares and is located to the south of Robin Hood Lane in the parish of Warnham. The site is outlined in red on the plan shown in Figure 2.1.

2.1.2 The application site forms part of the wider Warnham Park Estate which is a 500-acre rural estate consisting of a range of commercial, agricultural and residential uses.

Figure 2.1 – Site Plan (outlined in red)



2.1.3 Broomlands Farm was historically operated as part of a larger dairy farming enterprise. The dairy farming operation has since declined, and the site has not been used for dairy farming purposes for over 20 years. The buildings to the west of the site, which were formerly used in connection with the agricultural use, have since been repurposed for commercial purposes under planning permission DC/24/1459. This permission provides for their use for B8 storage as part of a farm diversification

project. Given that the land subject to this application is no longer required in connection with the historic farming activities, it now forms part of the wider diversification of the holding.

Figure 2.2 – Application Site in the Context of Broomlands Farm



2.1.4 The site is accessed directly off Robin Hood Lane via a private access track that serves the wider site.

Figure 2.3 – Aerial Image of the Site (Source: Google Maps)



2.1.5 The site comprises an area of grassland which is bordered by hedges and trees to three boundaries and is enclosed into two separate parcels by existing stock proof fencing and existing entry gates.

2.1.6 The site was previously used for agricultural purposes in connection with Broomlands Farm.

2.2 Surrounding Area

2.2.1 The application site is situated approximately 500m to the north of Broadbridge Heath and approximately 1.2km south of the built-up area boundary of Warnham.

2.2.2 The nearest residential properties are located to the north and east of the site, comprising Robin Hood Cottage and The Garden Cottage. A small cluster of residential properties is also located to the west of the site along Bailing Hill Road. Immediately to the west are commercial buildings within the applicant's ownership, separated from the site by a redundant sand school and areas of hardstanding. To the east, the site adjoins arable land forming part of the wider Warnham Park Estate.

3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Proposal

3.1.1 Planning permission is sought for the use of land at Broomlands Farm as an enclosed canine exercise area, comprising two individual paddocks. The paddocks are already enclosed and gated with stock-proof fencing, which was installed and maintained as pat of the site's former agricultural use and aims to offer a solution to both dog owners and farmers by providing a safe, controlled environment where dogs can exercise without posing a risk to livestock, as well as a form of diversification.

3.1.2 Livestock worrying is a significant and growing issue across southern England, including West Sussex. Nationally, NFU Mutual estimates that dogs attacking or worrying livestock cost the farming industry approximately £1.8 million in 2024, underlining the ongoing scale of the problem. Surveys conducted by NFU Mutual and the National Sheep Association demonstrate a concerning lack of awareness among dog owners, with many unaware that livestock worrying does not require physical contact. Even chasing livestock can cause extreme stress, leading to serious consequences, such as miscarriages in pregnant ewes, injury or lambs becoming separated from their mothers. In response, police forces across rural areas, including Sussex, continue to issue warnings advising doc walkers to keep dogs on leads around livestock, with owners liable to prosecution where incidents occur.

3.1.3 The urgency of addressing this issue is underscored by the latest figures from NFU Mutual, which estimate that farm animals worth approximately £1.95 million were severely injured or killed by dogs in the UK in 2025. This represents a 10% increase on the previous year and highlights the continuing financial and animal welfare impacts of livestock worrying. The figures demonstrate the ongoing need for responsible dog ownership and measures to reduce the risk of dogs coming into contact with livestock.

3.1.4 West Sussex has a notably high level of dog ownership compared to the national average and encompasses extensive areas of sensitive and protected countryside that are increasingly affected by uncontrolled dog activity. Despite continued education campaigns and management initiatives by Local Authorities, landowners and countryside organisations, issues such as livestock worrying, wildlife disturbance and conflict with agricultural operations persist. Ongoing residential development

across the country has further intensified pressure on existing public footpaths and informal walking areas, limiting suitable and safe spaces for dog exercise. As a result, the burden on farmers, rural businesses and the natural environment continues to grow. The provision of a secure dog exercise field would offer a practical and proactive solution, helping to reduce pressure on the wider countryside, safeguard livestock and wildlife, and deliver a clear recreational benefit for the local community.

3.1.5 The proposal aligns with the national push for diversification in rural areas, providing a sustainable and low-impact use for otherwise low-value agricultural land. The proposed site has been chosen with care, ensuring existing access is sufficient and the impact on local residents is minimal.

3.1.6 As previously mentioned, the application site is already sectioned into two separate paddocks with existing gates installed and the proposal is therefore only for the change of use of the land with the use of the existing boundaries historically installed and maintained.

3.1.7 Parking will be available within each paddock with Geocell being installed within the grass areas to protect the ground during inclement weather and to ensure no breaking of ground or hard surfacing is required for its intended use. To ensure visitors to the site do not drive within the paddocks, wooden posts will be placed to separate the parking from the field enclosure as shown in the proposed site plan in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 – Proposed Site Plan



3.1.8 New landscaping is proposed to further enhance the site and provide additional screening from neighbouring uses. This will include the planting of a native hedgerow and a new orchard comprising a range of traditional Sussex apple varieties along the boundary between the site and Robin Hood Cottage.

3.1.9 The facility is available for exclusive use only and is operated via a pre-booking system, does not allow "walk ins" and will be operated in-house by Warnham Park Estate.

3.1.10 Bookings for exclusive use of the site will be via their online booking system, and clients can book the following slots per paddock:

- 25 minutes for up to four dogs;
- 55 minutes for up to four dogs;

3.1.11 The site will operate seven days a week during daylight hours as there will be no lighting proposed as part of this application.

3.1.12 Once a booking has been made, a confirmation email will be sent which will contain a code to allow entry into the respective paddock that the client has booked along with a copy of the site rules. A copy of the rules can be found attached to this application.

3.2 Amenities on Site

3.2.1 Within the site there will be a moveable field shelter to allow a place for visitors to shelter during inclement weather. There are no supplies of water or toilet facilities on site.

3.2.2 Dog waste bins will be provided at the exits of the paddock and will be collected via a licenced carrier.

4 PLANNING BACKGROUND

4.1 Planning History

4.1.1 A review of the site's planning history has been undertaken using the online records displayed on the Horsham District Council website. There have been no previous applications relating to the application site; however, the wider site has been subject to the following applications:

Reference	Description	Decision
DC/25/1893	Notification of change of use of an existing agricultural building to a flexible commercial use	No objection 17/12/2025
DISC/25/0308	Application for Approval of Details Reserved by Condition 3, 6 and 7 to approved application DC/24/1459	Approved 6/03/2026
DC/24/1459	Change of use of a redundant agricultural barn to commercial use comprising Class B8 Storage	Approved 4/12/2024
DISC/24/0220	Approve of details reserved by conditions 16 and 27 to approved application DC/20/0716	Approved 21/10/2024
DISC/24/0034	Approval of details reserved by condition 11, 13, 14, 15 and 17 to approved application DC/20/0716	Approved 14/06/2024
DC/24/0381	Change of use of agricultural barn to commercial use comprising B8 (Storage)	Application Refused 17/09/2024

Reference	Description	Decision
DC/23/1997	Prior Notification for Change of Use of redundant agricultural buildings to flexible commercial use	Application Withdrawn
DC/23/0098	Non Material Amendment to previously approved application DC/20/0716 (Part demolition of central part of the agricultural building and conversion of the remaining parts of the building to create 2No. 3 bedroom dwellings and 2No. 4 bedroom dwellings with associated external alterations, car parking and landscaping) to allow for certain works to commence that do not require a Natural England License.	Full Permission 09/03/2023
DISC/23/0033	Approval of details reserved by conditions 3, 5, 6 parts (a) and (b), 7, 8, 9 and 10 to approved application DC/20/0716.	Full Permission 31/03/2023
DISC/23/0072	Approval of details reserved by condition 6 c) to approved application DC/20/0716.	Full Permission 24/04/2023

Reference	Description	Decision
DC/23/0521	Non Material Amendment to previously approved application DC/20/0716 (Part demolition of central part of the agricultural building and conversion of the remaining parts of the building to create 2No. 3 bedroom dwellings and 2No. 4 bedroom dwellings with associated external alterations, car parking and landscaping) to allow for amendments to plans previously submitted.	Full Permission 13/04/2023
DISC/23/0172	Approval of details reserved by conditions 4,11,13,14,15,17,18, and 19 to approved application DC/20/0716	Refused
DC/20/0716	Part demolition of central part of the agricultural building and conversion of the remaining parts of the building to create 2No. 3 bedroom dwellings and 2No. 4 bedroom dwellings with associated external alterations, car parking and landscaping.	Full Permission 24/07/2020

4.2 Planning Policy

4.2.1 Planning applications are required to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the Development Plan comprises the Horsham District Framework 2015 and Warnham Neighbourhood Plan. The National Planning Policy Framework is also a material consideration.

4.2.2 A review of the site's planning history has been undertaken using the online records

displayed on the Horsham District Council website. There have been no previous applications relating to the application site; however, the wider site has been subject to the following applications:

4.3 Horsham District Planning Framework 2015

Policy 1 – Sustainable Development

4.3.1 When considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work pro-actively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved, wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in that area.

4.3.2 Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in Neighbourhood Plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.3.3 Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision, then the Council will grant permission, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account whether:

a) any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or

b) specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

Policy 10 – Rural Economic Development

4.3.4 Sustainable rural economic development and enterprise within the District will be encouraged in order to generate local employment opportunities and economic, social and environmental benefits for local communities. In the countryside, development which maintains the quality and character of the area, whilst sustaining its varied and productive social and economic activity, will be supported in principle. Any development should be appropriate to the countryside location and must:

1. Contribute to the diverse and sustainable farming enterprises within the District or, in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, contribute to the wider rural economy and/or promote recreation in, and the enjoyment of, the countryside; and either

    a) 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; or

    b) result in the substantial environmental improvement and reduce the impact on the countryside particularly if there are exceptional cases where new or replacement buildings are involved. New buildings or development in the rural area will be acceptable provided that it supports sustainable economic growth towards balanced living and working communities and criteria a) has been considered first.

2. Demonstrate that car parking requirements can be accommodated satisfactorily within the immediate surrounds of the buildings, or an alternative, logical solution is proposed. Proposals for the conversion of rural buildings to business and commercial uses will be considered favourably over residential in the first instance.

Policy 11 – Tourism and Cultural Facilities

4.3.5 Measures which promote tourism and enhance local cultural facilities, including recreation based rural diversification, will be encouraged. Any development should be of a scale and type appropriate to the location and should increase the range, or improve the quality of accommodation, attraction or experiences for tourists, day visitors, business visitors, and residents in the District.

4.3.6 Support will particularly be given to proposals which:

1. Reinforce the local distinctiveness and improve existing facilities;

2. Focuses major tourism and cultural facilities in Horsham town centre;

3. Seek to ensure that facilities are available within the towns and villages in the District and are in keeping with their relationship with the urban area and

countryside around them especially in and around the High Weald AONB and the South Downs National Park;

4. Develop the opportunities associated with rural diversification and rural development initiatives, particularly where they assist farm diversification projects, benefit the local economy, or enable the retention of buildings contributing to the character of the countryside; and

5. Do not result in the loss of a cultural resource.

4.4 National Planning Policy 2026

Policy E4 – Rural Business Development

4.4.1 In applying Policy E4, the sustainable growth of businesses in rural areas should be supported, including through:

a) The conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;

b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based businesses;

c) Facilities to support rural leisure and tourism and measures to retain and expand accessible local shops and services; and

d) Development to maintain and enhance farm viability and sustainability and support domestic food production, such as improved accommodation for livestock, on-farm reservoirs, greenhouses, polytunnels, farm shops and temporary accommodation for seasonal workers.

4.4.2 Development proposals to meet business needs in rural areas may need to be located outside settlement and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances:

a) Development proposals should take opportunities, where they exist, to use previously developed lanes and site that are physically well related to existing development; and

b) The siting and design of development should be appropriate having regard to the character of its surroundings.

Policy N2 – Improving the Natural Environment

4.4.3 To contribute positively to the natural environment, and support nature's recovery, development proposals should:

d) Conserve and enhance natural features of visual, historic or nature conservation value (such as established trees and hedgerows) where possible; and use appropriate landscaping to help create a well-designed place and integrate the development into its surroundings.

5 APPRAISAL

5.1 Principle of Development

5.1.1 The proposal is consistent with Policies 10 and 11 of the Horsham District Planning Framework which encourage sustainable rural economic development and enterprise within the District in order to generate economic, social and environmental benefits for local communities whilst also contributing to diverse and sustainable farming enterprises which promote recreation and enjoyment of the countryside.

5.1.2 The small scale of the proposal is appropriate to its countryside location providing a secure and peaceful environment for visitors to exercise their dogs whilst enjoying the countryside views.

5.1.3 Whilst the proposal will likely see individuals visiting the site by car as it is pre-booked and for exclusive use only, vehicles using the site will be limited to a maximum of two cars at any one time.

5.1.4 The proposal will provide a form of farm diversification and a secure environment for residents of Warnham and Broadbridge Heath to walk their dogs in a safe environment.

5.2 Design and Appearance

5.2.1 The field is already enclosed by stock-proof fencing, and no significant physical modifications are required to facilitate its use as a dog exercise area. Additional native hedgerow planting and a new orchard are proposed, which will enhance the site and provide further natural screening from neighbouring uses. A small, modestly scaled moveable field shelter will also be provided to give walkers cover during inclement weather. The shelter will be positioned within the existing field and will be of a simple rural design appropriate to its setting. The remainder of the site will remain undeveloped and largely untouched, retaining its existing open and rural character.

5.2.2 The site will therefore remain largely similar in appearance to its previous agricultural use, with the existing field, boundary treatments and rural character retained. The proposed landscaping will further integrate the site into its surroundings and provide additional screening over time.

5.2.3 The site is bounded by existing fencing and is accessed via an established entrance. It is not visible from Robin Hood Lane and views from neighbouring properties are limited by existing vegetation, boundary treatments and the intervening landscape.

5.2.4 No hedgerows or trees will be removed as part of the development, and there will be no changes to existing land levels, drainage patterns or other landscape features. The proposed native hedgerow and orchard planting will provide additional landscape enhancement and screening as they mature. The character of the surrounding countryside will therefore be preserved, and the proposal will not result in any significant adverse visual impact when viewed from public vantage points or neighbouring land.

5.2.5 It is therefore considered that the proposal will not result in harm to the landscape character or visual amenity of the area. The proposal is consequently considered to comply with Horsham District Planning Framework Policies 25, 32 and 33, as well as Policy N2 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

5.3 Amenity Impacts

5.3.1 The site is sufficiently distant from the nearest residential properties to avoid any adverse impacts on neighbouring amenity with additional natural screening proposed between the field and neighbouring properties. The proposal is small in scale, is for a small number of dogs at any one time and does not allow large group bookings. Any activity on the site will not be audible from the nearest populated areas.

5.3.2 Use of the site will be strictly controlled through a set of terms and conditions, which will be provided to all visitors and must be adhered to. A copy of these terms and conditions is included with this submission. This will help ensure that the site operates at a low intensity, with visitor use appropriately managed to minimise any impact on the surrounding area and maintain its rural character.

5.4 Parking and Access

5.4.1 The site is accessed via an existing access from Robin Hood Lane, which currently serves Broomlands Farm. The proposal does not require the formation of a new access or alterations to the local highway network.

5.4.2 On-site parking will be within the paddocks with Geocell installed so no hardstanding is required with ample space to accommodate vehicles associated with the use. The facility operates on an exclusive use, pre-booked basis ensuring that only one user group accesses each paddock at any one time. This significantly limits vehicle movements and avoids peak time congestion.

5.5 Drainage/Water Neutrality

5.5.1 As there are no water facilities or toilets on site there is no need for site drainage or a requirement to achieve water neutrality.

6 SUMMARY

6.1 The planning application seeks planning permission for the use of land at Broomlands Farm as a canine exercise area.

6.2 The proposal will provide a secure environment within the countryside for the local community to enjoy whilst exercising their dogs.

6.3 The small scale of the proposal would have limited effect on the landscape, countryside and neighbouring amenity and could easily be turned back to its previous use.

6.4 The proposal is considered to comply with all the relevant Development Plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework and it is hoped the Planning Authority will feel able to support the application.