

**Retention of a sand school and 3 buildings for mixed agricultural
and private equestrian use**

at

Maplenut Farm, Maplehurst Road, West Grinstead RH13 6RN

Supported by Drawings

1895.2/01 - 05

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Background

This is a 4.2ha (10 acre) farm site purchased in 2001, which has evolved over time to accommodate a lawful family dwelling by conversion of an existing building erected in 2002, first occupied in 2008 and lived in since by the applicants and their three children.

The land continues to be maintained and used for agricultural purposes. Past use for sheep, goats and cattle has turned to taking a rotational crops off part of the land for hay or haylage (which is cut earlier than hay, baled on site semi-dry (40-50% moisture), wrapped in plastic and if space available stored inside the agricultural buildings the subject of this application to extend shelf-life) or for rotational grazing of the applicants private horses. The flock of about 40 chickens has free range opportunity during the summer but are housed in the barns during the winter.

The whole family has a passion for horses in one way or another. Mr Matthews has been a member of the British Driving Society for at least 45 years. During that time he has driven or shown Welsh Cobs, Hackney Horses and Clydesdales (a breed of draught horse originally from Scotland in the 17th century) for which he has won many awards. He uses his latest Clydesdale for harrowing and rolling the land at Maplenut Farm as well as assisting in breaking in horses by its side in a carriage.

Mrs. Matthews godmother is Pippa Bassett, who is known in National and International circles including WEG (World Equestrian Games) for 'four in hand' competition carriage driving, operating from her base in Capel. As a child, Mrs. Matthews was given a pony from Pippa's WEG team, which she rode at Capel under the tutelage of Pippa such that, by the age of 11, she was competing at a National level in show jumping, travelling as far as Scotland and Ireland for team events including at an International level. By 13, she qualified for the Horse of the Year Show with an ambition to be an Olympian. She went on to rent a 16 stable yard in Coolham for 10 years where she trained and rode horses including sourcing competition horses in Holland and bringing them on for clients. Unfortunately the yard owner died and the stable yard was sold away. Whilst a yard at Wisborough Green was sourced it proved too small in the long term to be viable despite income being bolstered by a short stint at Rusper riding horses for an up and coming event rider. It was during this period she met her future husband and ultimately settled at Maplenut Farm, soon after which they started a family. Whilst she still rides horses for recreational purposes she is now dedicated to passing on her skills to her three young children, all of whom have a passion for horse riding.

Whilst there is a bridleway (1739) on the opposite side of Maplehurst Lane that forms part of the Sussex Diamond Way long distance trail that ultimately leads onto Bridleway 3556 further to the west that is part of the Downs Link, its use, or that of any others nearby, on horseback involves travelling along a dangerous

stretch of road, which is unacceptable for children and horses alike. To ensure their safety, before the sand school was provided, children and ponies were therefore regularly transported by horsebox on a three hour round journey to an arena in Oakley 3 or 4 times a week.

There are currently 7 horses at the property including the Clydesdale, which are used for incidental recreational purposes although the Clydesdale is also used on occasions for maintaining the land and kept within a stall in one of the agricultural buildings. That horse might be relocated to dry pasture away from the site in due course. The whole family travels far and wide at the weekends and school holidays etc to allow the children to pursue their equestrian hobbies, with the resulting rosettes littering the walls of the stables and house as testament to their efforts.

Application Details

This proposes the retention of a sand school and 3 buildings (A, B & C on Block Plan 1895.2/01) for mixed agricultural and private equestrian use. Buildings A & B are used primarily for storage of agricultural related equipment and machinery etc used for maintaining the land as set out on the 'List of Horse and Farm Equipment and Machinery' supporting the application as well as any haylage taken off the land and associated hay and feed stuffs etc as necessary. Building C comprises 2 stables feed room and store/tack room.

Both agricultural buildings were salvaged from another farm where their modest height proved too limiting for continued use although they are both ideally suited to the needs of this particular farm. Building A measures 18.6m x 9.3m with a height of 4.6m and was rebuilt at this site by November 2021. It is constructed of corrugated metal. Whilst Building B was salvaged at the same time as Building A, it was not actually erected until September 2022 when the need for further storage capacity arose. Its smaller size amounts to 12.3m x 9.2m with a height of 4.0m. Building C measures 5.4m including roof overhang

x 14.3m, with a height of 3.5m. It is constructed of brick and timber under a slate roof. It was completed by May 2020.

Because of their limited heights all the buildings are screened entirely from view throughout the year by the extensive landscaping between the site and public highway that is at a lower level.

Planning Considerations

The Horsham District Planning Framework 2015 (HDPF) remains the Development Plan for the purposes of this application. The Nuthurst Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2031 (NNP) was made on 21 October 2015 and therefore forms part of the Development Plan. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides overarching policy guidance to be taken into account as a material consideration.

All policy documents relevant to this application seek to promote and support the presumption in favour of sustainable development including by serving the needs of the countryside, reducing travel and activity, whilst protecting the rural character of the area and the amenities and outlook etc of neighbours etc.

Development that requires a countryside location, such as equestrian development, is dealt with at Policy 29 of the HDPF and with which the proposals are considered to comply. The stables are appropriate in scale and well related to other buildings and the dwelling. Being for incidental use, the level of activity generated by the stables will not be in excess by that already generated by residential occupation of the site. The stables are related well to the bridleway network but safety issues for the children and ponies alike prevent access to that network along the public highway at the current time. However, the sand school allows the recreational equestrian activities of this family to be

addressed and contained to a safe area, with the added benefit of enhancing the sustainable characteristics of the site by doing away with the 3 or 4 weekly transportation visits to alternative safe horse exercise and training facilities. The development will reduce activity associated with the site, and therefore travel, which is a clear sustainable transport objective.

The agricultural buildings are of a scale and height that are well suited to this particular site because they are screened almost entirely from public view by virtue of the raised level of the site compared to the public highway and the intervening landscaping and fencing on and about the site. They are not visible in the landscape and clustered together in the yard area. They are no more and no less than the reasonable needs of this farm dictate relative to maintenance of the land and the welfare needs of the horses that comprise an agricultural use of the land when grazing in the fields. There are no neighbours affected by the development. Access to the site is well established and safe.

In all the circumstances, it is hoped the application will be approved under delegated powers because it proposes the retention of development that is in accordance with Development Plan policy and there are no material interests harmed by the development nor any material considerations of any weight that would justify a refusal in circumstances where the development causes no harm to any interest of acknowledged importance.

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