



Planning Statement

Change of use from agricultural use to dog walking area

Land to the north of Woodlands Lane, Colgate

prepared by

WPS Planning

Planning Statement

Land north of woodlands lane

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application seeking permission for the change of use of agricultural land to a private dog walking and exercise area operated by The Paws Park.
- 1.2 The application relates to the use of an area of existing agricultural land for structured and professionally managed dog exercise sessions. The proposed use is intended to provide a safe, secure, and controlled countryside environment where dogs can be exercised under supervision while maintaining the open and rural character of the site.
- 1.3 The proposal forms part of a small-scale rural business operation and represents an appropriate diversification of agricultural land use that is consistent with national planning objectives supporting rural enterprise and sustainable countryside activity.
- 1.4 The proposed operation has been specifically designed to remain low intensity in nature and to minimise any potential impact on neighbouring land uses, highway conditions, residential amenity, and the wider rural environment.
- 1.5 The site will operate on a restricted basis only, with operating hours limited to Monday to Friday between 10:30am and 1:30pm. There will be no evening operations, no weekend use, and no public events associated with the site.
- 1.6 Importantly, the proposal does not involve customer or client visits to the land. Dogs will instead be collected and transported to and from the site by The Paws Park as part of an organised and professionally managed service. This operational model significantly reduces traffic generation, parking demand, and general activity levels associated with the use.
- 1.7 The proposal is considered to represent a modest and sustainable rural enterprise that maintains the essential rural qualities of the site while delivering clear economic and community benefits.

- 1.8 This statement sets out a clear justification for the proposed development, demonstrating that it accords with the development plan when read as a whole and that there are no material considerations that would indicate otherwise. It should be read alongside the submitted plans and supporting documentation.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site comprises an area of existing agricultural land situated within a rural countryside setting. The land is characterised by open grassed areas and retains a distinctly agricultural appearance consistent with the surrounding landscape.
- 2.2 The wider area is predominantly rural in nature and includes agricultural fields, open countryside, vegetation, hedgerows, and sporadic rural development. The site sits comfortably within this rural context and does not form part of a densely developed or urban environment.
- 2.3 The existing land is undeveloped and visually open, contributing positively to the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside. The proposal does not seek to materially alter this character through significant built development or urbanising features.
- 2.4 Access to the site is achieved via an agricultural track from a private road (Woodlands Lane) off Grouse Road. Given the operational model proposed, the use of the land for private dog walking purposes is not expected to place undue pressure on local roads or infrastructure.
- 2.5 The nature of the surrounding area makes the site particularly suitable for the proposed use. The open countryside setting provides an appropriate environment for controlled dog exercise while also allowing sufficient separation from more densely populated residential areas.
- 2.6 The proposal has been carefully designed to work within the existing characteristics of the land rather than fundamentally changing them. The open appearance of the site will remain largely unchanged and the agricultural

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qualities of the surrounding landscape will continue to dominate the visual character of the area.

- 2.7 No extensive engineering works, permanent structures, commercial buildings, or intensive operational infrastructure are proposed as part of the application.
- 2.8 The proposal therefore represents a low-impact use of rural land that integrates appropriately within its countryside setting.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 The land has historically been used for agricultural purposes and currently remains agricultural in character and appearance.
- 3.2 To the applicant's knowledge, there is no recent planning history relating to commercial, recreational, or alternative countryside uses on the site.
- 3.3 The current application therefore seeks permission for the change of use of the land from agriculture to a private dog walking and exercise area operated by The Paw Spark.
- 3.4 The proposal does not represent an intensification of existing development nor does it involve substantial operational change to the wider surrounding area.
- 3.5 Instead, the application seeks consent for a carefully managed and low-intensity countryside use that remains compatible with the site's rural context.

4.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of agricultural land to a private dog walking and exercise area operated by The Paw Spark.
- 4.2 The proposed use will provide professionally supervised dog exercise sessions within a secure and controlled outdoor environment.
- 4.3 The operation has been intentionally designed to remain modest in scale and carefully managed in order to minimise impacts upon the surrounding area.
- 4.4 The proposed operating hours are limited to:
- Monday to Friday only
 - 10:30am to 1:30pm
- 4.5 There will be:
- No evening operations
 - No weekend operations
 - No public events
 - No unrestricted public access
- 4.6 The proposal will accommodate approximately 20 dogs on site at any one time.
- 4.7 All dogs will be supervised by experienced handlers and managed as part of structured exercise sessions.
- 4.8 A key feature of the operational model is that there will be no customer or client visits to the site. Dogs will instead be collected directly from clients and transported to the site by the operator.
- 4.9 This approach substantially reduces the level of vehicle movements typically associated with dog exercise facilities and avoids continual arrivals and

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departures throughout the day.

- 4.10 The proposal is therefore fundamentally different from a public dog park or high-intensity recreational facility. Instead, it represents a small-scale, professionally managed countryside business operating within tightly controlled parameters.
- 4.11 The land will continue to appear largely open and undeveloped, ensuring that the rural character of the site is preserved.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that this should run through both plan making and decision taking. In terms of the determination of planning applications this should mean the approval of developments that accord with the development plan without delay, and that where the development plan is silent or relevant policies are out of date, that permission be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or policies of the NPPF indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 Sustainable development is seen within the NPPF as having three roles, namely an economic, social and environmental role which should be a golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking.
- 5.3 The following sections within the NPPF (2024) are important factors in the assessment of the proposal:
- Section 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy
 - Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
 - Section 11 – Making effective use of land

- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places

Local Plan

5.4 In terms of the local planning policy context for the Application Site, the adopted Development Plan for the Horsham District is composed of the following relevant documents:

- Horsham District Council Planning Framework (HDPF) – Adopted November 2015
 - Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
 - Policy 3 - Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy
 - Policy 10 – Rural Economic Development
 - Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
 - Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
 - Policy 33 - Development Principles
 - Policy 40 – Sustainable Transport

6.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The proposed change of use has been carefully considered against the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) together with the overarching objectives of the Development Plan relating to sustainable rural development, protection of countryside character, residential amenity, highway safety, environmental protection, and rural economic growth.
- 6.2 The proposal represents a low-intensity and carefully managed countryside use which has been specifically designed to operate in a manner that minimises impacts upon the surrounding area while supporting an existing local rural business.
- 6.3 Importantly, the proposal does not involve substantial built development, urbanising infrastructure, unrestricted public access, or intensive commercial activity. Instead, the proposal seeks permission for a tightly controlled operational use of existing open land.
- 6.4 The following assessment demonstrates that the proposal is acceptable in planning terms and accords with the relevant objectives of national and local planning policy.

Principle of Development

- 6.5 The National Planning Policy Framework places significant emphasis on supporting sustainable economic growth within rural areas.
- 6.6 Section 6 of the NPPF, entitled “Building a Strong, Competitive Economy”, confirms that planning decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand, and adapt.
- 6.7 Paragraph 88 specifically states that planning decisions should enable:
- The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas;

- The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses; and
- Sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.

6.8 The proposal is also considered consistent with the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF), including policies relating to sustainable development, the rural economy, countryside protection, and quality of development.

6.9 In particular:

- Policy 1 promotes sustainable development.
- Policy 4 supports economic growth and sustainable rural enterprise.
- Policy 25 seeks to protect the countryside against inappropriate development while recognising the need for sustainable rural activity.
- Policy 32 requires development to achieve high standards of design and integrate appropriately with local character.
- Policy 33 seeks to protect amenity and environmental quality.

6.10 The proposal is therefore considered consistent with the broad objectives of both national and Horsham local planning policy which support appropriate rural enterprise and low-impact countryside uses where they do not result in unacceptable harm to landscape character, residential amenity, or highway safety.

6.11 The principle of the proposed development is considered entirely appropriate within this countryside location.

6.12 The proposal represents a modest and sustainable diversification of agricultural land use which remains closely linked to the rural environment. The

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nature of the activity, professionally supervised dog exercise within open countryside land, is inherently suited to a rural setting and does not require an urban or town centre location.

- 6.13 The use is also fundamentally low intensity in character. The operational hours are tightly restricted to a short weekday period between 10:30am and 1:30pm, with no evening, weekend, or public holiday operation proposed.
- 6.14 The absence of customer visits significantly reduces the overall activity level associated with the site. Unlike many commercial recreational uses, the proposal will not result in continual arrivals and departures, extensive parking demand, or unrestricted public access.
- 6.15 The proposal therefore differs substantially from intensive leisure or commercial operations and instead represents a carefully controlled countryside use with limited operational impact.
- 6.16 Importantly, the proposal makes productive and sustainable use of existing land without requiring substantial physical development or permanent urbanising infrastructure. The proposal is therefore considered fully compliant with the principles of sustainable rural diversification promoted through national planning policy.

Character and Appearance

- 6.17 The NPPF places considerable importance on protecting the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Section 12 of the NPPF seeks to ensure that developments are visually attractive, sympathetic to local character, and responsive to the surrounding built and natural environment. Section 15 further seeks to conserve and enhance the natural environment while recognising the need to support sustainable rural growth.
- 6.18 Within the Horsham District Planning Framework, Policy 25 seeks to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, while Policy 32 requires development to respect and respond positively to local landscape character.

- 6.19 These policies collectively seek to ensure that development proposals respond positively to their surroundings without introducing visually harmful or urbanising features into rural areas.
- 6.20 The proposed development will preserve the existing rural character and appearance of the application site and surrounding area.
- 6.21 A key consideration in this respect is the exceptionally limited physical nature of the proposal. No substantial buildings, engineered structures, floodlighting, formal parking areas, or urbanising infrastructure are proposed.
- 6.22 The land will remain predominantly open and undeveloped in appearance and will continue to read visually as countryside land. The proposal therefore avoids the types of visual impacts commonly associated with more intensive commercial or recreational development.
- 6.23 The operational characteristics of the proposal also assist in limiting any visual impact. Activity will occur only during a short weekday operational period and there will be no evening or weekend use.
- 6.24 In addition, the absence of customer visits means there will be very limited vehicle activity associated with the site. The proposal has clearly been designed to work with the existing rural environment rather than altering or dominating it.
- 6.25 Given the limited nature of the proposed use together with the absence of substantial operational development, the proposal is not considered to result in any material harm to the visual amenities of the area or the wider countryside character.
- 6.26 The development is therefore considered consistent with the objectives of national and local planning policy relating to landscape protection and high-quality countryside development.

Residential Amenity

- 6.27 The NPPF requires planning decisions to secure a high standard of amenity for existing and future users of land and buildings. Paragraph 135 confirms that development should create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.
- 6.28 Within the Horsham District Planning Framework, Policy 33 seeks to ensure that development does not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of nearby occupiers through noise, disturbance, activity levels, or other environmental impacts. These policies seek to ensure that development proposals do not result in unacceptable impacts through noise, disturbance, traffic generation, or general operational activity.
- 6.29 The proposal has been specifically designed to minimise any potential impact upon neighbouring occupiers and surrounding land users. The operational model includes several important control measures which substantially reduce the potential for disturbance.
- 6.30 Firstly, the proposed operating hours are tightly restricted to weekday daytime periods only between 10:30am and 1:30pm. There will be no evening activity, no early morning operation, and no weekend use. These restrictions ensure that activity does not occur during the periods most sensitive to residential amenity.
- 6.31 Secondly, the proposal will operate on a professionally supervised basis. Dogs present on site will remain under the control and supervision of experienced handlers at all times. This is materially different from unrestricted public dog exercise areas where activity levels can become unpredictable.
- 6.32 Thirdly, the proposal does not involve customer or client visits to the site. This significantly reduces the level of movement, activity, and general disturbance associated with the operation. The proposal therefore avoids many of the amenity impacts that can arise from continual customer arrivals and

departures. The rural location of the site also assists in limiting any potential impact.

- 6.33 Taking all of these factors into account, the proposal is not considered likely to result in unacceptable levels of noise, disturbance, or general amenity impact. The development therefore accords with the objectives of national and local planning policy relating to residential amenity protection.

Traffic and Highway Safety

- 6.34 Section 9 of the NPPF promotes sustainable transport and seeks to ensure that developments provide safe and suitable access for all users. Paragraph 115 confirms that development should only be refused on highways grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or where the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 6.35 Within the Horsham District Planning Framework, Policy 40 seeks to ensure that development proposals provide safe access arrangements and do not create unacceptable impacts upon the local highway network. These policies seek to ensure that development proposals do not create unacceptable traffic impacts or compromise highway safety.
- 6.36 The proposed development is expected to generate only a modest level of vehicle activity. Importantly, the operational model proposed significantly reduces traffic generation when compared with traditional customer-based recreational uses.
- 6.37 Dogs will be collected and transported to the site by the operator rather than individual owners travelling separately. This means that vehicle movements associated with the proposal will remain consolidated, controlled, and limited in frequency. The proposal will therefore avoid the continual vehicle arrivals and departures that are often associated with commercial leisure uses.
- 6.38 The restricted weekday operating hours also ensure that activity occurs outside the busiest commuter traffic periods. Furthermore, as there will be no customer

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visits, there will be no requirement for significant on-site parking provision.

- 6.39 The overall scale and nature of the operation is therefore such that the proposal is not expected to place undue pressure upon the local highway network. No evidence exists to suggest that the proposal would give rise to unacceptable highway safety concerns.
- 6.40 Accordingly, the proposal is considered compliant with the objectives of national and local planning policy relating to highways and transport.

Ecology and Environmental Impact

- 6.41 Section 15 of the NPPF seeks to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, minimising impacts on biodiversity, and preventing environmental harm.
- 6.42 Within the Horsham District Planning Framework, Policies 30 and 31 seek to protect environmental quality, landscape character, and biodiversity interests. These policies seek to ensure that development proposals safeguard ecological interests and avoid unnecessary impacts upon environmental quality.
- 6.43 The proposed use is environmentally low impact in nature. The proposal involves minimal physical intervention within the site and does not require extensive engineering works, significant excavation, or substantial built form.
- 6.44 The land will remain open in appearance and existing vegetation and landscape features can continue to be retained and managed appropriately. Given the limited operational intensity of the proposal, no significant ecological impacts are anticipated.
- 6.45 The proposal also incorporates responsible site management practices. Dog waste will be collected and removed from the site as part of normal operational procedures, ensuring that environmental quality is maintained. The proposal therefore represents a sustainable form of rural land use which is not

considered harmful to the local environment. The development is considered consistent with the environmental objectives of national and local planning policy.

Economic and Community Benefits

- 6.46 The NPPF places substantial weight on supporting economic growth and productivity, particularly within rural areas. National planning policy recognises the importance of small rural enterprises in supporting local economies, creating employment opportunities, and promoting sustainable countryside activity.
- 6.47 Within the Horsham District Planning Framework, Policy 4 supports sustainable economic growth and rural enterprise where proposals remain appropriate in scale and character to their countryside setting. Local planning policy therefore encourages appropriate forms of rural diversification and sustainable economic development.
- 6.48 The proposal will support an existing local rural business and contribute positively to the rural economy. The development represents an example of small-scale rural enterprise diversification which aligns closely with the objectives of national planning policy.
- 6.49 The proposal will assist in supporting local employment and self-employment opportunities while also contributing to the provision of professional dog care and exercise services. In addition, the proposal delivers wider community and animal welfare benefits through the provision of secure and professionally managed exercise space.
- 6.50 The proposal therefore provides meaningful economic and social benefits while remaining entirely proportionate and appropriate to its rural setting. Overall, the development is considered to represent a sustainable and policy-compliant form of rural economic activity.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application seeking permission for the change of use of agricultural land to a private dog walking and exercise area operated by The Paws Park. The proposal represents a carefully considered, small-scale, and appropriately managed form of rural diversification which has been specifically designed to operate in a low-intensity and environmentally responsible manner while remaining fully compatible with its countryside setting. The proposed use makes productive use of existing open land without requiring substantial built development, urbanising infrastructure, or intrusive operational activity, and therefore preserves the essential rural qualities and openness of the site.
- 7.2 The assessment contained within this statement demonstrates that the proposal accords with the overarching objectives of both the National Planning Policy Framework and the Horsham District Planning Framework. In particular, the development supports the principles of sustainable rural economic growth and diversification promoted through Section 6 of the NPPF together with Policy 4 of the Horsham District Planning Framework. The proposal will support an existing local rural business, contribute positively toward rural enterprise and self-employment, and provide a professionally managed animal welfare service, all within a form of development that remains proportionate and appropriate to its countryside location.
- 7.3 The proposal has also been carefully designed to ensure that the intrinsic character and appearance of the countryside are preserved. Importantly, the development does not involve extensive engineering works, permanent commercial buildings, floodlighting, formalised parking areas, or urbanising infrastructure that would materially alter the visual qualities of the site or wider landscape. The land will remain predominantly open and agricultural in appearance, and the operational characteristics of the use are intentionally limited in scale and duration. As such, the proposal is considered fully consistent with the objectives of the NPPF together with Policies 25 and 32

of the Horsham District Planning Framework relating to countryside protection, landscape character, and quality of development.

- 7.4 In amenity terms, the proposal has been specifically structured to minimise any potential impact upon neighbouring occupiers and surrounding land uses. The operational hours are tightly restricted to weekday daytime periods only between 10:30am and 1:30pm, with no evening activity, no weekend operation, and no public events proposed. Furthermore, the use will operate on a professionally supervised basis at all times and will not involve customer or client visits to the site. This significantly reduces overall activity levels, vehicle movements, noise generation, and general disturbance. The controlled nature of the operation clearly distinguishes the proposal from unrestricted public recreational uses and ensures that impacts upon residential amenity remain limited and acceptable in accordance with the objectives of the NPPF and Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.
- 7.5 The proposal is also considered acceptable in highway and transport terms. A key characteristic of the operational model is that dogs will be collected and transported to the site collectively by the operator rather than through multiple individual customer journeys. This approach substantially limits traffic generation and avoids continual vehicle arrivals and departures throughout the day. The restricted weekday operating hours also ensure that activity occurs outside peak commuter periods. Consequently, the proposal is not expected to place undue pressure upon the local highway network or result in unacceptable highway safety impacts. The development therefore accords with Section 9 of the NPPF together with Policy 40 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.
- 7.6 From an environmental perspective, the proposal represents a sustainable and low-impact use of rural land. Existing landscape features, vegetation, and countryside characteristics can be retained and protected, while the modest operational nature of the proposal ensures that no significant ecological harm

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is anticipated. The use of the site remains entirely compatible with its wider rural setting and does not result in unnecessary environmental intrusion or degradation. The proposal therefore aligns with the environmental objectives of the NPPF together with relevant Horsham District Planning Framework policies relating to landscape and environmental protection.

- 7.7 Overall, the proposed development represents a sustainable, proportionate, and policy-compliant form of rural development which delivers clear economic, social, and operational benefits while maintaining the open and rural character of the site and ensuring that impacts upon neighbouring land uses remain appropriately controlled. Having regard to the relevant provisions of the Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework, it is considered that the proposal constitutes sustainable development for which planning permission should be granted. Accordingly, planning permission is respectfully requested.