

Dear Ms Johnson,

Please see below my OBJECTION to all current planning applications at Beckley Stud, RH13 9DQ.

It is imperative that this representation is considered by planning officers and the planning inspector when appointed.

Regard,

[REDACTED]

Representation regarding Beckley Stud

Enforcement case EN/24/0296

Planning applications DC/25/2133, DC/25/2023 and DC/25/1444

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to make representations regarding Beckley Stud, Reeds Lane, Southwater, RH13 9DQ, in relation to enforcement case EN/24/0296 and planning applications DC/25/2133, DC/25/2023 and DC/25/1444.

Summary of key concerns

I respectfully request that significant weight is given to the following matters when determining the current applications and enforcement issues at Beckley Stud:

1. A repeated pattern of unauthorised development

There appears to be a persistent pattern of development taking place without planning permission, followed by retrospective applications or appeals once enforcement action has commenced.

2. Apparent non-compliance with Planning Inspectorate conditions

Several conditions attached to the Planning Inspectorate decision dated 7 May 2025 (Appeal Refs APP/Z3825/C/23/3324026 and APP/Z3825/W/23/3324019) appear, on the face of it, to have been breached, including:

- the limit of no more than 12 employees on site;
- the limit of no more than 8 lorry deliveries/collections per week;

- the requirement to submit drainage details and Biodiversity Net Gain information within the required timescales.

3. Highway safety concerns

The frequency and scale of HGV movements associated with the site appear excessive for Reeds Lane, which is a narrow rural road regularly used by cyclists and horse riders.

4. Continuing enforcement issues

Storage containers subject to Enforcement Notice EN/23/0124 remain on site, despite earlier justification that previously approved storage buildings would enable their removal.

5. Cumulative industrialisation of a rural site

Taken together, the scale of buildings, storage, traffic and commercial activity now associated with Beckley Stud appears to amount to a gradual transformation of the site from an equestrian use into a warehouse, distribution and logistics operation that is inappropriate in this rural location.

Background and overall concern

The constantly changing nature of Beckley Stud, together with the applicant's repeated mainly retrospective applications, appeals and variations, makes it difficult even for those familiar with planning matters to keep track of the true nature and extent of the use taking place on the site.

Over the years, the site has been described in various ways, including as:

- a private equestrian facility for retraining and rehabilitation of racehorses;
- a charitable project
- a breeding operation for racehorses and show hunter horses and ponies;
- a training and breeding site linked to showjumping activity;
- a bespoke research and development centre
- and now a storage and distribution base for Equine America products.

It is this latter use which gives rise to the greatest concern, as it appears materially different in character from a genuine rural equestrian use. A warehouse and logistics-type operation is far more appropriately located on an industrial estate or commercial site with suitable road access, not on a narrow country lane in a rural area.

Pattern of retrospective and unauthorised development

The owner of Beckley Stud, trading as Equine America, appears to have demonstrated a consistent pattern of proceeding with development first and seeking permission retrospectively later, often after enforcement action has begun.

That pattern undermines confidence in the planning process. It is particularly concerning where enforcement action relating to buildings erected without permission is appealed, while at the same time further permissions are sought for additional development.

There is currently a digger positioned on the site of the latest planning application for a proposed storage building under DC/25/2133. Given the history of this site, there is understandable concern that further works could commence irrespective of whether permission has been granted. I would therefore urge the Council's Enforcement Team to monitor the site closely and to take immediate action, including service of a Stop Notice if appropriate, should unauthorised operational development begin.

Erosion of the equestrian character of the site

It should also be noted that Beckley Stud can no longer be described as a working equestrian facility in the ordinary sense. Current proposals include:

- the conversion of existing stables to offices under DC/25/1444; and
- development affecting the existing sand arena for the construction of further storage or warehouse space under DC/25/2133.

Taken together, these proposals would further erode the equestrian function of the site. The housing and training of horses will not be possible. It is therefore important that decision-makers assess the reality of the use now taking place, rather than relying solely on historic descriptions of the site as equestrian.

Planning Inspectorate decision dated 7 May 2025

Application DC/22/0388, for retention of the existing green steel-clad building, was allowed on appeal by the Planning Inspectorate:

- Inspector: R Satheesan
- Date: 7 May 2025
- Appeal Ref A: APP/Z3825/C/23/3324026
- Appeal Ref B: APP/Z3825/W/23/3324019

That decision was subject to a number of planning conditions. Several of those conditions appear not to have been complied with.

Condition 2 – employee numbers

Condition 2 states that: “There shall be no more than 12 employees working across the appeal site...”

There is concern that this limit is being exceeded. Observations indicate at least 17 vehicles arriving and remaining parked on site during the morning, suggesting significantly more than the permitted number of employees. That figure does not appear to include the business owner or the driver of the branded van that regularly enters and leaves the site.

Condition 3 – drainage details

Condition 3 requires drainage details to be submitted within three months of the Inspector’s decision.

I have been unable to identify evidence that those details were submitted within the required timeframe. If that is correct, then this would represent a breach of condition and raises concerns about whether compliance with the Inspector’s decision has been properly monitored.

Condition 7 – HGV movements

Condition 7 states that: “The development hereby permitted shall not result in more than 8 lorry deliveries and collections per week on Mondays to Fridays inclusive between the hours of 0800 and 1800, and there shall be no deliveries by articulated vehicles.”

This condition also appears to be routinely exceeded. On several occasions I have personally observed up to five HGV deliveries or collections in a single day.

Typical movements appear to include Prestige Distribution pallet deliveries, often two per day, together with a Royal Mail lorry collection, which alone could amount to around 15 lorry movements per week, almost double the limit imposed by the Inspector.

In addition, Horley Road Services and Stan Robinson vehicles are also regularly seen attending the site. These are substantial HGVs and are wholly unsuitable for a narrow rural road such as Reeds Lane.

I have also witnessed occasions where vehicles have had to reverse into Coltstaple Lane due to large HGVs exiting Beckley Stud. I hold video evidence of such incidents. This gives rise to clear highway safety concerns, particularly as the lane is regularly used by cyclists and horse riders.

There have also been occasions where articulated vehicle deliveries have occurred, despite articulated vehicles being expressly prohibited by Condition 7. Until recently, articulated trailers were also stored within the yard, further suggesting a disregard for the restrictions imposed.

Condition 10 – Biodiversity Net Gain

Condition 10 required full details of Biodiversity Net Gain measures to be submitted within three months of the decision.

The applicant later submitted an application to vary this condition under DC/25/2023, but that application was not made until 29 January, despite the three-month deadline expiring on 7 August. On the face of it, this suggests a significant period of non-compliance.

For clarity, the concern is not with any reasonable request to extend time where justified. Rather, the concern is with the apparent failure to comply with the original condition and the wider pattern of seeking to dilute or defer requirements only after they have not been met.

Local employment

The applicant frequently refers to the provision of employment for local people as a justification for the scale and nature of the activities now taking place at Beckley Stud. While the creation of employment opportunities is welcomed in principle, this does not in itself justify the establishment or expansion of a warehouse, storage or distribution-type operation in a rural location that is clearly unsuited to such activity.

Within the wider Horsham area there are numerous established industrial estates and commercial premises specifically intended to accommodate logistics, storage and distribution businesses. These locations benefit from appropriate highway infrastructure capable of safely accommodating HGV traffic and are generally better served by transport links for employees.

By contrast, Beckley Stud is accessed via Reeds Lane, a narrow rural lane which is frequently used by cyclists, horse riders and agricultural vehicles. The road network is not designed to accommodate the level of commercial traffic now associated with the site. In planning terms, employment benefits should therefore be weighed against the clear harm arising from the intensification of commercial activity in this rural location, including highway safety concerns and the gradual industrialisation of a site that historically functioned as a small-scale equestrian facility.

While the success of a local business is not in question, the key planning issue is whether the scale and nature of the operation is appropriate for this rural location, particularly when more suitable commercial premises designed for logistics and distribution uses are readily available within nearby industrial areas.

Storage containers and repeated justification for further buildings

There remain a number of storage containers on site that are subject to Enforcement Notice EN/23/0124 dated 21 March 2023.

According to my conversation with an Enforcement Officer, the earlier justification for retention of the green steel-clad warehouse, later approved retrospectively, was that it would allow the contents of those containers to be moved indoors so that the containers themselves could then be removed.

However, the containers were not removed and remain on site. They are now again being relied upon as justification for the temporary white warehouse building, on the basis that their contents will need to be housed when the containers are finally removed to comply with the enforcement notice by May 2026.

This gives rise to a legitimate concern that the same containers are repeatedly being used to justify successive additional storage buildings, when earlier permissions were said to resolve precisely that issue.

Further indications of intensification

Within the past year, the applicant has also installed a metal gate in the perimeter fence opposite the current entrance. While this may not in itself amount to a breach of planning control, it may indicate intentions for further access or future development.

There is also concern about the manner in which some development has been carried out. For example, the temporary white storage building, now the subject of Enforcement Notice EN/25/0425, appears to have been erected at speed on a Friday afternoon and over the weekend, immediately before the Christmas period. That sequence of events gives the appearance of a deliberate attempt to establish development before effective intervention could take place.

Concerns as to transparency and reliability of information

There are also wider concerns regarding the reliability of information previously presented in planning matters relating to this site. By way of example, the applicant previously used our address on a planning application despite no longer residing there. We purchased the property from Mr Middleton and moved in on 1 July 2015.

The applicant also stated in earlier planning submissions that he lived adjacent to the site and therefore would not require on-site residential accommodation linked to the stables. My understanding is that he was in fact residing in Florida at that time.

I appreciate that some of these matters may be historic, but they are relevant insofar as they contribute to a wider pattern that decision-makers may reasonably take into account when considering how much weight can be placed on current assurances.

Historic enforcement matters

It is also worth noting that the following enforcement cases were previously closed:

- EN/22/0145 – creation of self-contained residential accommodation within the stable block.

From observations made from the roadside, the windows of the stable block have at times appeared dressed with curtains and picture frames, giving the appearance of domestic occupation consistent with a self-contained living space. It is therefore notable that the current application DC/25/1444 (conversion of stables to offices) includes drawings of the existing stable layout which do not appear to show any provision for residential accommodation.

While these matters may now be historic, there is evidence suggesting that such activities did take place. When viewed alongside the other issues outlined above, they contribute to a broader pattern that raises concerns regarding compliance with planning control at the site.

Request to the Council and the Planning Inspectorate

In light of the matters above, I respectfully request that the Local Planning Authority and the Planning Inspectorate give careful regard to the applicant's ongoing pattern of non-compliance when determining the current enforcement matters and planning applications associated with Beckley Stud.

In particular, I request that the following are taken into account:

- a full investigation into potential breaches of the conditions attached to the Inspector's decision dated 7 May 2025, including employee numbers, HGV movements, drainage compliance and Biodiversity Net Gain requirements;
- appropriate enforcement action where breaches are identified;
- close monitoring of the site to ensure that no further unauthorised development takes place, particularly in relation to the land associated with DC/25/2133;
- careful consideration of the cumulative impact of development and intensification of commercial activity at Beckley Stud;
- proper weight being given to the highway safety implications of repeated HGV traffic along Reeds Lane; and
- recognition that the scale and nature of the activities now taking place appear more akin to a warehouse and logistics operation than a rural equestrian use.

When assessing the current applications and enforcement matters, it is important that they are not considered only in isolation. The cumulative effect of successive buildings, retrospective applications, storage structures, traffic generation and operational intensification is highly material. Viewed as a whole, the site now appears materially different from the small-scale equestrian use that historically operated here.

It is also relevant to consider the applicant's overall record of compliance. In circumstances where there have been repeated retrospective applications, enforcement investigations and apparent failures to comply with conditions within the required timescales, it is reasonable for decision-makers to scrutinise carefully the extent to which future assurances and proposed operational limits can be relied upon.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully request that significant weight is given to the applicant's planning history and compliance record when determining EN/24/0296, DC/25/2133, DC/25/2023 and DC/25/1444.

Yours faithfully,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.