



Planning Committee

Astwood Bank & Feckenham Ward

14 July 2009

**2009/096/FUL OUTDOOR MENAGE (HORSE RIDING ARENA) ON COMMERCIAL EQUINE LAND
TOOKEYS FARM, TOOKEYS DRIVE, ASTWOOD BANK
APPLICANT: MR I BURFORD
EXPIRY DATE: 20 AUGUST 2009**

Site Description

(See additional papers for Site Plan)

The site is accessed along Tookeys Drive, a lane leading from the A441 through Astwood Bank. The lane leads past various residential properties of no uniform character, setting and appearance to a group of historic and modern farm buildings, including a listed farmhouse. This complex is clearly in several ownerships now, but would originally have formed one farm.

Tookeys Farm lies to the south west of the group, with a large detached modern farm house and garden and various farm and equestrian buildings. The site is at a high level and the surrounding fields slope down away from the farm to the west and the north/south. The village of Astwood Bank lies to the east.

Proposal Description

This is an application for an outdoor ménage (horse riding arena) within a field adjacent to the indoor riding arena which is one of the buildings within the farm group. This would be at the northwest end of the farm complex. The ménage would measure 20m x 60m and be enclosed with post and rail timber fencing. The surfacing would be a sand mix, a sample of which has been provided with the application. The application also details the proposed bunding to the north and western boundaries of the ménage and cut and fill cross sections, demonstrating that no soil or other material will need to be imported or exported to facilitate the proposed development, simply redistributed within the site. This is due to the undulating nature of the land surrounding the farm complex. Hawthorn hedging is proposed around the perimeter of the site.

The equine livery use of the site has been continuous since the 1970s, however it has been gradually in decline recently and so the owners intend to refurbish and update the facilities and thus improve their business, providing additional jobs for the local economy. As such this proposal complements these proposed works and does not represent an intensification of the permitted use of the site.

The application is supported by a Design & Access Statement, a baseline ecological survey, climate change statement and a landscape assessment.

Relevant Key Policies

All planning applications must be considered in terms of the planning policy framework and all other relevant material considerations (as set out in the legislative framework). The planning policies noted below can be found on the following websites:

www.communities.gov.uk

www.wmra.gov.uk

www.worcestershire.gov.uk

www.redditchbc.gov.uk

National Planning Policy

PPS1 (& accompanying documents) Delivering sustainable development.
PPG2 Green belt.

Regional Spatial Strategy

RR1 Rural renaissance.

PA14 Economic development and the rural economy.

PA15 Agriculture and farm diversification.

QE1 Conserving and enhancing the environment.

Worcestershire County Structure Plan

SD2 Care for the environment

CTC1 Landscape character

D38 General extent and purposes of the Green Belt

D39 Control of development in the Green Belt

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 3

CS2 Care for the environment.

CS8 Landscape character.

BBE13 Qualities of good design.

BRA1 Detailed extent of and control of development in the Green Belt.

Relevant Site Planning History

Appn. no	Proposal	Decision	Date
08/162	Agricultural notification of barn extension	Accepted	16/6/8
08/250	LDC for existing commercial equine activities	Granted	17/10/8

Public Consultation Responses

One comment received raising no objection

Responses in favour

None

Responses against

Four comments received raising the following points:

- Intensification of traffic use of Tookeys Drive and resultant safety concerns;
- Inadequate visibility at junction of Tookeys Drive with A441;
- Intensification of equestrian use at farm;
- Suggests restrictions relating to users of the ménage, hours of use and special events.

Consultee Responses

County Highway Network Control

No objection.

Environmental Health

Comments awaited.

Procedural matters

This application is reported to the Planning Committee for determination as it is a 'major' application, in accordance with the adopted scheme of delegation. It falls within the 'other small scale major' category of the performance indicators.

Assessment of Proposal

Principle

The proposed use of this part of the site for a ménage is considered to be acceptable in principle, as it would be ancillary to the existing equine use of the site and not result in an intensification of use that could give cause for concern, or at least additional consideration.

Development within the Green Belt should protect and enhance the openness of the landscape character in order to preserve it fit for purpose. It is considered in this case that due to the design, siting and appearance of the proposed ménage and bunding, the visual impact on the landscape would be minimal. However, it is considered necessary to ensure that the ménage is not artificially lit without the control of the Local Planning Authority.

It is therefore considered that the principle of development is compliant with policy requirements, subject to detailed policy criteria being met.

Design and layout

The proposed development would be of appropriate and acceptable materials, design and siting relative to the site and its surroundings and as such would result in minimal visual intrusion into the Green Belt landscape. It is not of a sufficient size or enclosure that it is considered to affect detrimentally views from the Green Belt, given that it would be viewed with a backdrop of the existing farm building complex. The views out from the site of the Green Belt would remain largely uninhibited, given the height of the proposed fencing and bunding and therefore it is considered that the openness of the Green Belt would continue to be protected.

The proposed ménage would be at a significant distance from any residential properties and not in a direct line of sight from any, as well as there being natural screening between the site and residential properties. It is therefore considered that the proposal would have minimal impact on surrounding residential amenities. The site is currently within a field where horses are kept and thus the horses would not be any nearer than currently to other residential properties. It is therefore considered that the proposal complies with policy in terms of protecting residential amenity.

Landscaping and trees

No significant landscaping or planting is proposed and the bunding and hedges have been designed to be effective without being intrusive and as such are considered to be appropriate. The hedging proposed is of an indigenous species and common in the area and therefore also considered to be acceptable. There are no trees or shrubs proposed to be lost as a result of the proposal.

Highways and access

As the proposal does not result in an intensification of the use of the site, it is not considered reasonable to require any additional information or works on the drive that leads to the site. Further, the Highways Officer considers that there is no cause for concern and the proposal is therefore considered to be compliant with policy and unlikely to cause significant additional harm to highway safety.

Sustainability

The site is accessed via the sustainable settlement of Astwood Bank and whilst it is sited within the Green Belt, it is considered that access to the site is reasonable for this type of use. Further, as it is an existing use, it is preferable that ancillary facilities are provided in this location than in a more remote rural location. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal complies as much as possible with the sustainable objectives of planning policy.

Other issues

It has been suggested that the hours of use of the ménage be restricted, however as it is external, it is not considered likely that it would be used for sufficiently anti-social hours that it should be controlled. Further, it is not clear what harm such hours of use could cause.

This application proposes only the ménage, as the remainder of the equestrian facilities and uses on site already benefit from consent. Therefore, any restrictions proposed must relate to concerns or policy issues arising solely from the *addition* of the ménage to the existing livery yard. Similarly, it is not possible to restrict the operation as a whole through the granting of this consent, but only the proposed ménage.

The suggestions of the objector that the use of the ménage be restricted, and that site wide events be restricted are therefore not considered to be reasonable restrictions, as it would be difficult to demonstrate in planning terms a reason for such restrictions that arises due to the addition of the outdoor ménage.

Conclusion

The proposal is considered to comply with policy objectives and criteria, and unlikely to cause any additional harm to visual or residential amenity or to highway safety and as such is considered to be acceptable. It is considered that there should be no lighting of the ménage without the formal consideration of the Local Planning Authority.

Recommendation

That having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, planning permission be GRANTED subject to conditions and informatives as summarised below:

1. Time limit for commencement of development;
2. Materials and surfacing as per application submission unless otherwise agreed;
3. All works including bunding to be completed before use commences;
4. Hedging to be planted within first available planting season after construction commences;
5. All works to be in accordance with plans and details submitted;
6. That the development is not artificially lit.

Informatives

None considered necessary in this case.