

Equestrian Facilities



Introduction

The Council receives a variety of equestrian related planning applications ranging from small-scale stables to larger riding establishments with outdoor menage areas. As the majority of the Borough's countryside is Green Belt, there is a need for careful controls. PPG2 Green Belts (Jan 1995) states various positive Green Belt objectives including the following:

- to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas
- to retain attractive landscapes and enhance landscapes near to where people live.

The construction of new buildings within Green Belts is considered inappropriate but national guidance allows certain exceptions including essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation for example small stables for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation.

Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas provides further guidance on equine-related activities.

Policy DC32 Equestrian Facilities in the Adopted Macclesfield Borough Local Plan (Jan 2004) builds upon the national guidance above and sets out a number of criteria that should be met. This supplementary planning guidance looks at each of the criteria in turn and provides additional information/guidance.

The following documents also provide additional useful information.

“Horses in the Countryside”
Countryside Commission 1997

“Guidelines for the Keeping of Horses”
British Horse Society 1998

“Equestrian Enterprises on the Farm”
MAFF 1983

Policy DC32 and Further Guidance Notes

DC32 The establishment of equestrian facilities will normally be allowed in the countryside provided that:

Criterion 1:

Proposals for stables and ancillary facilities are small scale and required in the interests of animal welfare.

Notes

Small structures relating to horse-riding can be appropriate within the Green Belt. Small structures/stables shall be taken as referring to the development of up to and including 3 loose boxes (where a loose box is normally taken to be a 12'x12' bay within a stable block). An extra/similar sized bay may be permitted to provide for the storage of feed, bedding, tack, etc.

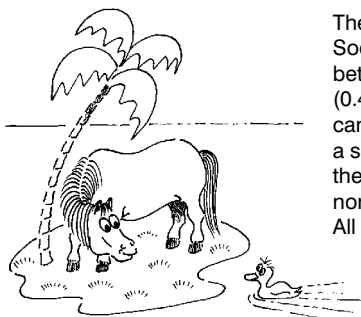
The British Horse Society recommends the following guidelines for stables:

A stable should be large enough for the horse to lie down, stand up and turn around without difficulty allowing 0.9m (3 feet) clearance in the roof. They recommend a minimum floor area of between 3 x 3.7m (10 x 12 feet) for ponies, 3.7m x 3.7m (12 x 12 feet) for horses (preferably 12 x 14 feet for larger individuals) and a height of between 2.7 and 3.4m (9 to 11 feet) according to the size of the horse. The stable doors should be a minimum of 1.2m (4 feet) wide and 2.3m high (7ft 6ins), the bottom door being 1.2m (4 feet) high. More information is included in the Countryside Agency's advice note.

Where additions to existing stables are proposed, additions which increase the size beyond that of small stables (three loose boxes with a fourth for bedding, feed and tack storage) will normally be considered inappropriate development for which very special circumstances to warrant the overriding of Green Belt policies would be required.

Criterion 2:

Sufficient land is available for supplementary grazing and turnout for exercise.



The British Horse Society suggest that between 1 and 2 acres (0.4 - 0.8ha) of pasture can provide grazing for a single horse through the summer months in normal circumstances. All horses require additional feed from October to March. The Countryside Agency's advice

note provides guidance on pasture management and fencing.

Proposals will be examined to ensure that they are not speculative but genuinely required. In the interests of safeguarding animal welfare and environmental quality, it is important to ensure that land used by horses is appropriately managed. The Borough Council may in some instances require the preparation of a land management plan. This may include the following:

- All hedging and fencing and proposals for their maintenance.
- Storage of feed and bedding.
- Storage of horseboxes and trailers.
- Installation, removal and storage of jumps/arena markers, etc when not in regular use.
- Details for storage and removal of manure.
- Measures to be taken to control poisonous and unsightly plants.

Criterion 3:

The development is not prominent in views from local vantage points.

Notes

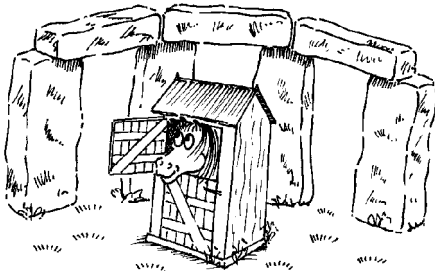
The proposed development, including any access drive and parking facilities may need to be well screened to make it relatively inconspicuous in the landscape. This may be of particular importance in Areas of Special County Value for Landscape. New hardcore access tracks, new stables or outdoor exercise areas may introduce new and intrusive features in these sensitive landscape areas. For example new stables could be sited behind an existing wall, hedge or copse of trees to make the development less conspicuous in the landscape.

Criterion 4:

The development would not harm an Area of Special County Value for landscape, or nature conservation importance or archaeological importance.

Notes

See above. It may be appropriate to impose planning conditions related to the use of temporary materials such as timber and temporary consents (for example for five years) so that the impact can be assessed and stables could be removed on the cessation of their usage. Proposals that involve engineering operations to create new outdoor exercise areas (menages) may be inappropriate in Areas of Special County Value because of their landscape impact. Where jumps are required as part of the development, conditions may be required where appropriate to secure their removal when not in use. The Countryside Agency's advice note considers that jumping equipment should be put away immediately after use as part of good pasture management, as well as improving the appearance of the paddock.

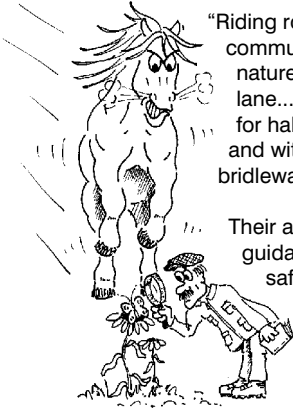


Criterion 5:

The proposal does not lead to an over-use and deterioration of bridleways and open spaces in the vicinity or create off-site highway hazards.

Notes

Applicants may be requested to provide an assessment of the effect of their proposal on erosion, on the vegetation on land to be used and on rights of way. The Agency's Code of Practice contains the following advice:



“Riding routes are valuable to all the community. They may be somebody's nature trail, historic site or memory lane....Responsible riding means caring for habitats....Even in good conditions and without particularly heavy usage, bridleways need maintenance”.

Their advice note provides further guidance on where to ride and riding safety.

In particular the riding of horses off site should not cause inconvenience or danger to pedestrians, drivers or horse riders themselves.

The Borough Council will have regard to the cumulative effects of proposals and may not permit additional development in areas under particular stress for intensive horse use.

Criterion 6:

The development does not involve the loss of agricultural land graded 1, 2 or 3a.

Notes

Paragraph 28 of PPPS7 explains the importance of protecting the most versatile agricultural land from development.

Criterion 7:

Access and car parking provision is satisfactory to the local highway authority.

Notes

The proposal should meet the necessary standards for visibility, parking and access including the provision of areas for unloading and loading of horses and access onto the highway for both horses and vehicles. The proposal should not give rise to unacceptable nuisance, danger or increases in vehicle movements.

Criterion 8:

The proposal would not harm residential amenity or other sensitive uses.

Notes

The Countryside Agency's advice note recommends that stables should be within sight and hearing distance of residential property, preferably this would be the owner's property but this may not be practicable. Against this though, the amenities of other local residents needs to be considered. Ideally to avoid any conflict, neighbouring curtilages should be separated from any proposal by a buffer zone. Items such as manure heaps should be carefully sited and should not be sited near to a watercourse or where there is a risk of effluent leaking through the soil into underground aquifers. Any requirement for lighting may also cause amenity problems or be unacceptable in landscape terms. Low level lighting for security may be acceptable but the erection of floodlighting in connection with outside exercise areas may be unacceptable. The Borough Council's supplementary planning guidance on "Floodlighting for Sporting Activities" gives further guidance on this issue.



Criterion 9:

Larger scale facilities utilise redundant buildings or are sited within an existing complex of buildings, form part of a farm diversification scheme, and remain as part of the original holding.

Notes

Redundant farm buildings may present opportunities for use in connection with riding facilities. New buildings will generally be required to be grouped with existing buildings and car parking areas located within such grouped development. The fact that a use is already established will not be regarded as an automatic presumption in favour of allowing its expansion. A site may be inappropriately located for larger scale use.

Criterion 10:

The scale, design, siting and materials of any necessary development must be appropriate to the landscape setting of the site.

Notes

Regarding small scale stabling, the main considerations will be those relating to site area and screening and appropriate materials. When choosing construction materials, the following points should be considered:

- initial cost verses future maintenance costs
- fire resistance and insulation properties
- quality of manufacture and installation
- suitability and colour of material to harmonise with local buildings and the landscape.



Generally, small scale stables should be of timber construction with a low pitch roof. Hard surface areas, fencing and landscaping should be of a design appropriate to a rural setting if situated in a countryside location.

Small/medium sized commercial facilities can be very damaging in sensitive countryside or rural areas and location will be critical.

New stable development should not exceed the requirements of the equine enterprise and should have an appropriate internal layout and external appearance. Any new development should not be detrimental to either openness in the Green Belt or character of the landscape.

Criterion 11:

The proposal does not require the provision of residential accommodation.

Notes

Dwellings associated with the keeping of horses are an inappropriate form of development in the countryside. It is not considered that the security of horses justifies the overriding of Green Belt policies and there are other methods of providing site security. Where the future need for accommodation is anticipated, stables should be located close to an existing dwelling.

Conditions

Conditions may cover such matters as:

- materials eg timber if small scale potentially temporary structures
- temporary consent (eg for five years)
- removal and storage of jumping equipment when not in use
- materials re surfaced areas such as parking areas, exercise areas (menages), access tracks, fencing, hardstanding areas
- landscaping and screening
- lighting eg no floodlighting
- no commercial use re small stables
- personal permission
- submission of a land management scheme
- limit to number of horses stables/or grazing

Useful Addresses

Countryside Agency

7th Floor
Bridgwater House
Whitworth Street
Manchester
M1 6LT

Tel: 0161 237 1061

Fax: 0161 237 1062

British Horse Society

Stoneleigh Deer Park
Kenilworth
Warwickshire
CV8 2XZ

Tel: (01926) 707700

Fax: (01926) 707800

Note:

Riding stables or schools require a licence under the Riding Establishments Acts, 1964 and 1970. Please contact Environmental Health for further details.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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