PLANNING STATEMENT:

Application for equestrian surfaced track and field shelter at

View Farm, Ravensroost Road, Minety, Malmesbury, Wiltshire SN16 9RJ

Prepared by:

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 An application is being submitted by Mr Paul Moffatt and Mrs Cathy Moffatt, in relation to the land forming part of the property at View Farm, Ravensroost Road, Minety, Malmesbury, Wiltshire SN16 9RJ. The proposal is for an equestrian surfaced track and field shelter, for the private use of their family horses.

1.2 I am a rural planning consultant specialising in the equestrian development sector. I hold BSc Equine Welfare with Business Management, LLDip Law degree and PgC Agricultural Law. I advise the public and private sectors throughout the UK, preparing independent appraisals and attending appeal hearings and public inquiries. I have an in-depth knowledge of the equine industry and equine welfare.

1.3 With formal academic qualifications in law, business management, equine science and behaviour, I act as expert witness in litigation and prepare expert reports for solicitors in relation to personal injury cases, disputes and veterinary negligence.

2.0 The Site

2.1 The applicants have recently purchased the property as their family home. The site comprises the detached house, known as View Farm, and approximately 14.7 acres (5.97 hectares) of land, with 12.5 acres (5.07 hectares) of grazing land. There are also a range of outbuildings, stabling and a riding arena. The property was originally run as a small agricultural enterprise.

2.2 The application site lies in the North Wiltshire countryside, with no near neighbours, and is well-screened by established hedgerows.

3.0 Planning History

3.1 The most recent planning history relating to the site is as follows:

20/02702/FUL Creation of Wildlife Pond - Approved 1st June 2020

13/05182/FUL Erection of Outdoor Arena – Approved 9th January 2014

4.0 Background

4.1 The applicants' daughter is a very experienced horse owner and rider. The property, with the equestrian facilities, was purchased to enable their daughter, Holly, to have her horses at home rather than keeping them at livery.

4.2 Holly is particularly interested in more modern approaches to equine welfare management. This focuses on providing horses with a more natural environment, which is more compatible with their physiology.

4.3 In their natural environment, horses live in herds and are able to roam and graze freely and their physiology is designed to support this way of living. Accordingly, the proposal for keeping Holly's horses does not include traditional stabling, but minimal facilities to enable them to live in as natural a way as possible whilst still managing their specific health and welfare issues, as detailed in section 7.

5.0 Proposal

5.1 The proposal comprises the following:

- Surfaced track in a 'figure of 8' layout approximately 5m wide, with central 'island' areas.
- Timber field shelter, with black onduline roof, measuring 11m x 3.6m

5.2 The surfaced track will be positioned in the corner of the field, to the east of the house. This is well-screened by the established hedging, which provides some natural protection from the wind. The surfaced track will extend over an area of approximately 0.7 hectares.

5.3 The surfaced track will be created by removing the topsoil, laying hardcore, followed by a membrane and a surface.

5.4 The perimeter of the surfaced track area will be fenced with 'horse net' with a timber top rail to the north and west sides, with the existing hedging to the south-west and south-east. The tracks will be fenced with timber posts and tape.

5.5 The central areas will remain grassland.

5.6 Indicative plan:



5.7 The timber field shelter will be open to the front and put on to a concrete base to provide essential shelter from bad weather and enable the horses to be fed hay inside. This will be sited along the south-west boundary.

5.8 Photograph showing design of field shelter:



5.9 No trees or hedging will be removed.

5.10 No external lighting is proposed.

5.11 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been carried out by Dipper Ecology Ltd. This concluded that the proposals *'... would present low potential for impacts'*. The PEA is being submitted with the application.

6.0 Planning Policy

6.1 The relevant national and local policies in examining this application are:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy January 2015
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021

6.2 The Wiltshire Core Strategy does not have policy for equestrian development. Equestrian facilities require a countryside location and are therefore appropriate development in rural areas. The site is not within a designated area, such as the Green Belt or AONB.

6.3 However, in line with Wiltshire Core Strategy Policy 50 Biodiversity and Geodiversity, a PEA has been undertaken to consider the potential impacts of the proposal. This report concluded that there was a low potential for impacts.

6.4 In addition, the proposal specifically benefits the land and biodiversity by protecting the land from typical damage caused by horses grazing and allowing it to improve from historic equine grazing.

6.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports rural enterprise and growth. Section 6, 'Building a strong, competitive economy'

Supporting a prosperous rural economy:

83. Planning policies and decisions should enable:

a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;

b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land- based rural businesses;

c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and

84. Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by

public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

6.6 Whilst the equestrian use is not a commercial use but a private one, it nonetheless contributes to the local rural economy by supporting local vets, farriers, feed merchants and local farmers as well as other equestrian related services and products.

6.7 It also provides for sustainable recreation due to not having to travel to a livery yard to ride and provide care of the horses.

6.8 The proposal relates directly to sport and leisure activity. The applicant keeps horses for recreation.

6.9 The proposal represents minimal development and is the minimum necessary to enable it to fulfil its purpose, as set out in section 7.0.

7.0 Justification for Proposed Facilities

7.1 The following horses are owned by Holly Moffatt, who has provided details of the equine welfare needs of the individual horses:

Horse 1 - EMS and laminitic, requires heavy restriction to grass but is also mildly arthritic and condition has improved since being out full time and otherwise would only be allowed out for a few hours a day. Suffers with lymphangitis so his legs swell if he's stationary too long which is another issue with being stabled. Severe allergies made worse by being in an enclosed environment and habit of scratching when bored. The requirement of restricted grazing impacts on his quality of life by preventing him being outside.

Horse 2 - been retired due to injury and mild bone-deformity since she was 6 (she's now 13). Has severe stable anxiety after spending a lot of time in when she was younger due to injury and now tries to jump out if she's left in the stable too long. Also benefits from lots of movement.

Both horses require all year round turn out to provide the best quality of life. The land is incredibly boggy due to the clay and, it's closeness to intersecting land drains. This results in the fields getting very wet in the winter.

7.2 As explained by Holly, the horses each have very specific equine welfare management requirements. Horse 1 has a metabolic disorder that means their access to grass has to be restricted.

7.3 Although this can be achieved by stabling them for most of the time, this inherently leads to further welfare problems. In their natural environment, horses live in herds and are able to roam and graze freely but the lack of movement during stabling can lead to circulatory conditions, as well as anxiety as a result of social isolation. The surfaced area is designed to address the horses' health concerns and maintain high standards of equine welfare.

7.4 The system of a surfaced track area provides much improved land management. When horses are turned out, besides grazing, they spend significant periods of the day standing still, sleeping etc. This results in compacted soil and its associated problems – less biodiversity, less pasture, more weeds, soil erosion, mud, dust etc.

7.5 This system will also protect the paddock from damage during wet weather, when paddocks can quickly become damaged. The track will therefore facilitate a good system of land management.

7.6 The siting of the field shelter and the surfaced track area has been selected so as to ensure the least impact visually, whilst keeping all development on site compact.

8.0 Conclusion

8.1 The proposal is for minimal facilities to provide essential standards of welfare for the horses, due to their specific health concerns. The equestrian use is a private use.

8.2 The facilities proposed are proportionate to the private equestrian needs of the applicants and have been designed to minimise any impact on neighbouring properties or the landscape.

8.3 The private recreational use of the site for the keeping of horses, ancillary to the residential use, has previously been supported. The application continues to fully comply with local and national planning policy.

Sally-Ann Tinsley BSc LLDip PgC Ag Law September 2023