RCC TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANCY



Site: Land to the north of 224 Bath Road, Shaw, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 8EG

Proposal: Retention of outdoor riding arena.

On behalf of: Mrs Helen Roberts

Date of Issue: June 2023

RCC TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANCY

PLANNING STATEMENT

RCC Town Planning Consultancy

T: 01380 730047
W: www.rcctownplanning.co.uk
E: info@rcctownplanning.co.uk

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicants to support their full planning application for the creation of an equestrian riding arena.

1.2 The riding arena is already in situ and this is a retrospective application for its retention.

1.3 This statement will examine how the proposed development relates to its site and context. The statement will also provide an explanation and justification for the scheme having regard to the national and local plan policy context.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 This planning application relates to land associated with 224 Bath Road, Shaw. Shaw is designated as a large village within the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) but the application site lies outside of the defined settlement boundary and consequently, for planning purposes, lies within the open countryside.

2.2 The riding arena has been constructed within an area of land to the north of 224 Bath Road, beyond the stable block, yard and associated access that the Council has all previously approved. This location was chosen because of its proximity to the stable block and because it was a large, level, surface area upon which the arena could easily be constructed. The existing equestrian related development is all used for the personal use of the applicant and does not form part of a livery or any other equestrian related business.

2.3 The site is not covered by any particular landscape, cultural or historic or nature designations. Footpath MELK37 is positioned over 250m to the east, running in a north-south direction. It does however lie within Flood Zone 3.

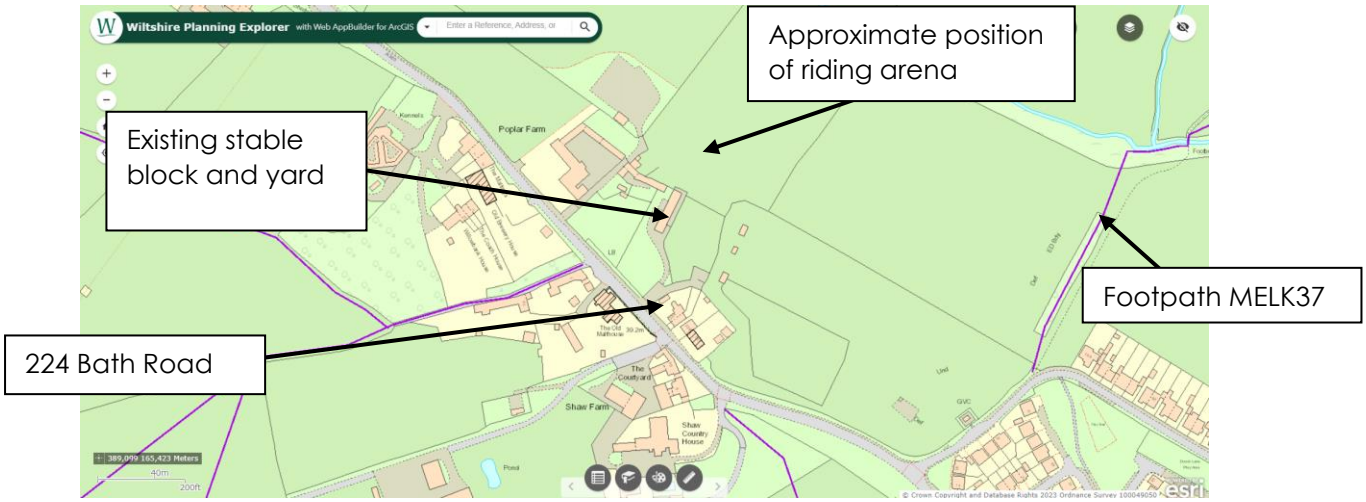

Figure 1: Location Plan (map source: Wiltshire Council)

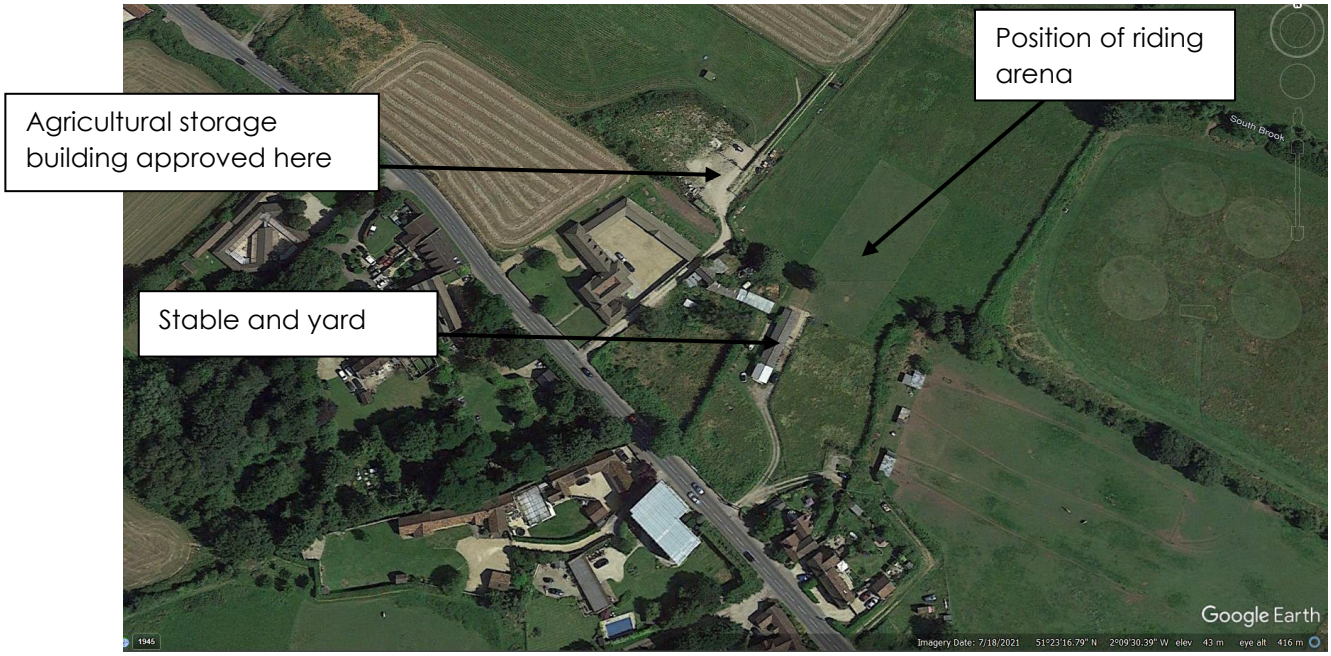

Figure 2: Aerial photograph showing the site

2.4 The field in which the arena is sited offers a wide expanse of level land secured by fencing and hedging to its perimeter, with a number of hedge line trees which help to contain and screen the site. There is an existing vehicular access serving the stables, storage building and small yard. The position of the arena close to the stable building and paddocks mean that the horses are close to their grazing, exercise and training arena.

2.5 The arena measures 40m x 20m and is finished with a permeable surfacing of waxed silica sand and rubber pellets. The submitted cross-section shows the design and permeability of the surface. As the site was already level, no significant areas of excavation or cut and fill were required. Timber paddock fencing, 1.25 – 1.30m in height, runs along the perimeter to ensure the safety of both horse and rider.

2.6 The applicant, having applied for planning permission for the stables, access and garaging, was unaware that consent was also required for the engineering works and change of use associated with the riding arena. Works for the arena started in November 2021 and were completed in December 2021. The arena was specifically required to enable the applicant to exercise their horse all year round as access to riding out is almost impossible on the busy A365. It's limited to an early Sunday morning and then with a tail walker to keep all road users safe.

2.7 The purpose of this planning statement is to support the retrospective planning application which has been submitted to regularise the situation.

2.8 Turning to planning history, there is none of direct relevance to the application site. Previous permissions relate to the stable block to the south and the associated access serving this and the arena. However, of relevance, is

planning permission 17/07684/FUL which approved the erection of a large barn in the neighbouring field and sits almost directly west of the riding arena.



Figure 3: View of riding arena, looking north – photograph shows the dense, mature hedging and trees to the field boundaries.



Figure 4: View from stable block looking north towards the riding arena



Figure 5: View of the arena in relation to the agricultural storage building approved in the neighbouring field

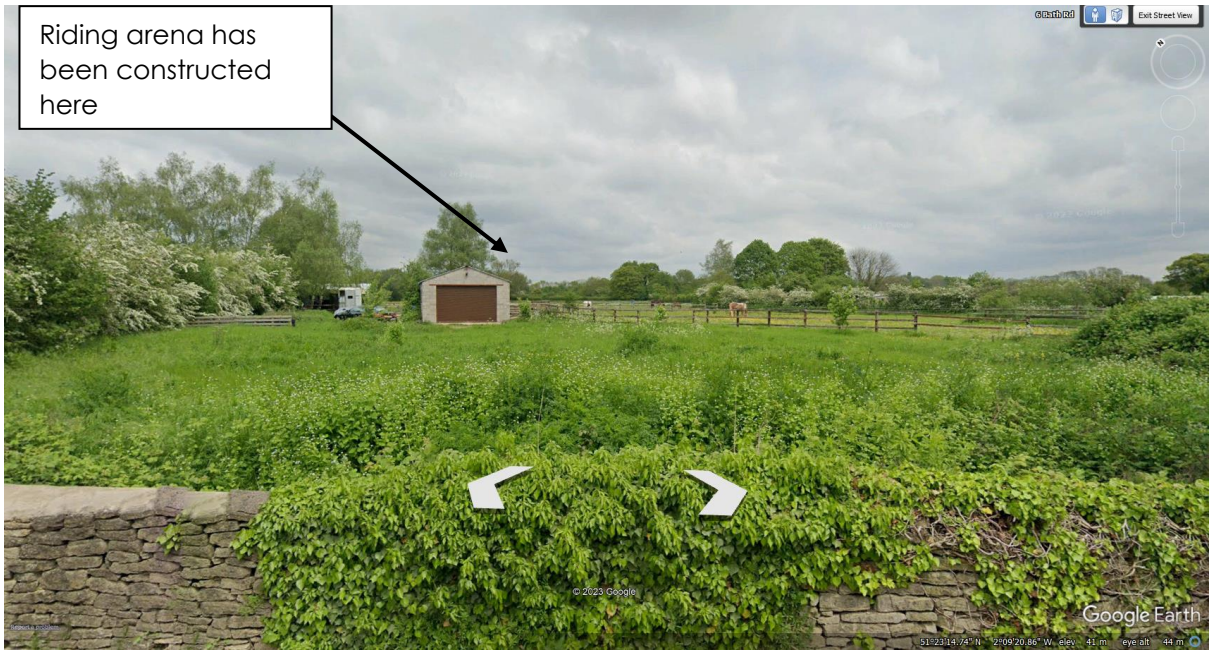

Figure 6: View of the site from the A365 Bath Road – arena in rear field behind the stable and garaging block seen in the photograph (source GoogleEarth – image dated May 2023)

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

3.1 The main planning policy framework relevant to this proposal is the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS), including 'saved policies' of the West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration (WWLP) (2004) and the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan.

3.2 Government guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) as supplemented by the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) are significant material considerations.

WILTSHIRE CORE STRATEGY

Policy	Title
CP15	Melksham Community Area
CP51	Landscape
CP 57	Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping
CP58	Conservation of the Historic Environment
CP61 – CP64	Highways Policies
CP67	Flood Risk

SAVED POLICIES WWLP

Chapter	Title
CP39	Environmental enhancement
E10	Horse related development
CR1	Footpaths and rights of way

MELKSHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Policy	Title
3	Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management
17	Landscape Character

NPPF

Chapter	Title
8	Promoting Healthy Communities
12	Achieving well designed places
15	Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

4.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

4.1 The key considerations are:

- The principle of the proposed developments in this location
- Design, including with landscape and visual impact,
- Flood risk, and
- Residential amenity.

Principle of Development

4.2 The applicant is specifically seeking consent for the riding arena for their personal use. The arena allows the client to use the arena with their horses which means that they have a safe space to ride and train all year round. As previously stated, the arena measures 40m x 20m. This is a modest sized arena with many typically measuring 60m x 25m.

4.3 Whilst planning policy is rather silent on the issue, equestrian uses are an accepted countryside use. By their very nature, equine uses require a 'rural' location, with access to fields and bridleways and, as such, it would be unreasonable to object to them on sustainability grounds. Consequently, the principle of such uses and their associated arenas are acceptable in the countryside. This is, however, subject to there being no particular conflicts with planning policy which would outweigh the benefits.

4.4 In particular, the proposal needs to be considered against core policies 51, 57 and 67 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. Core Policy 51 requires that development should not cause harm to the locally distinctive character of settlements and their landscape setting. Core Policy 57 requires a high standard of design in all new developments. Core Policy 67 relates to flood risk but largely relates to residential development with flood zones 2 and 3.

4.5 Saved Policy E1O refers to equestrian related development and is copied below:

> **Horse Related Development**
>
> **E10 Proposals for equestrian facilities and changes of use will be required to have regard to minimising their effects on the appearance of the countryside and to highway implications. All such building proposals should have special regard to siting, design materials and construction to ensure they blend in with their surroundings and do not have an adverse impact on the countryside and the natural environment including the water environment. Dwellings related to equestrian activities will be considered against Policies H19, H20 or H21 as appropriate.**

4.6 The site is well served by the local highway network and an existing vehicular access already serves the stable block to the south. Furthermore, the arena, as required by E10 and as described below, has minimal visual impact and does not have an adverse impact on the surrounding countryside and views within the area.

Design, including with landscape and visual impact

4.7 Notwithstanding the fact that the site does not lie within any protected area nor is it covered by any landscape designation, the arena has very little impact upon the character and scenic quality of the area.

4.8 The land is level across its extent and the arena will not be elevated or unduly prominent in views from the surrounding road network or wider rights of way. The arena is a typical feature of the countryside, associated with equine activities and is barely perceivable from the A365 Bath Road (the main public view of the site). From the right of way, in filtered views it will seen as a typical rural feature and would be viewed against the backdrop of the surrounding buildings and tree cover.

4.9 The mature dense hedging and tree belts to the site boundaries will screen the vast majority of views. Any glimpsed views would be heavily filtered by existing vegetation and consequently the proposed development would not have a harmful appearance.

4.10 The site is certainly not isolated, with the immediate landscape containing other agricultural and equine related buildings, most notably the barn approved to the west under planning permission 17/07684/FUL which lies very close to the boundary on the adjacent field. Furthermore, equestrian related development (like farming) is a feature that is commonplace and accepted in the countryside. Due to the positioning, and limited scale of the proposal, it is therefore considered that it would not have a harmful impact on the visual amenities of the area or the wider landscape character and appearance. This is particularly so given the enclosed nature of the small site, the limited views into the site and the lack of impact on any distinctive features of the landscape.

4.11 The riding arena is therefore a typical development found within a rural landscape such as this and is not an alien or incongruent feature that causes any visual harm. With such limited visual impact, it could not be concluded that the development has a significant impact on the landscape and the scheme is considered to comply with policies CP51 and CP57 of the WCS, policy 17 of the MNP and the relevant chapters of the NPPF.

Residential amenity

4.12 In respect of neighbour amenity, the proposed development is sited a significant distance away from the closest neighbours so as not to give rise to demonstrable harm. The closest neighbour is over 50m from the arena, with intervening trees and a farm track separating the two.

4.13 Furthermore, given that the arena and stable are for personal use only, we submit that they would not result in undue impacts on the amenity of neighbours. The private use of the arena will not generate a level of noise and disturbance that would be considered detrimental to the amenity of neighbouring residents, particularly given the separation involved.

4.14 The proposed scheme therefore complies with policy CP57 of the WCS and chapter 8 of the NPPF.

Flood risk

4.15 The site is located within Flood Zone 3 as defined on the Environment Agency Flood Risk Maps; this means the site is at the highest level of flood risk. A flood risk assessment (FRA) has therefore been submitted with the planning application and should be read alongside this statement.

4.16 The proposed use of the application site (i.e. riding arena) is considered to be within the outdoor sport and recreation (water compatible development) category and thus the development is appropriate for the site.

4.17 The surfacing of the arena has been designed so that is permeable to allow water filtration. Flood risk will not therefore be increased elsewhere.

4.18 It is therefore submitted that the proposed development will not be at risk to flooding and neither will it give rise to flooding elsewhere and complies with CP67 of the WCS and policy 3 of the MNP as well as the relevant guidance within the NPPG.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 It is clear from this planning statement and the submitted plans that the planning application complies with the planning policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the relevant 'saved' planning policies having regard to the matter of principle.

5.2 The statement has set out that the proposals do not give rise to a detrimental impact on the occupiers of the nearby residential dwellings, the landscape qualities of the area or flood risk.

5.3 It is therefore requested that the applications be approved.