

Application:	<b>2017/0104/MAJ</b>	<b>ITEM 1</b>			
Proposal:	<b>Construction of Residential Accommodation for Staff at Ranksborough Stables.</b>				
Address:	<b>Equestrian Centre, Melton Road, Langham, Rutland</b>				
Applicant:	<b>Mr M. Appleby, Hilltop Equestrian Centre</b>	Parish	<b>LANGHAM</b>		
Agent:	<b>Mr Ross Thain, Ross Thain &amp; Co. Ltd</b>	Ward	<b>Langham</b>		
Reason for presenting to Committee:	<b>Contrary to the Development Plan</b>				
Date of Committee:	<b>4 July 2017</b>				

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**In principle, new residential accommodation in the countryside is contrary to the provisions of the development plan. However, limited accommodation intended to meet the operational needs of this rural enterprise (including its licensing requirements) is accepted, subject to the recommended occupancy condition.**

## RECOMMENDATION

**APPROVAL**, subject to the following conditions:

1. The development shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.  
  
Reason – To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
2. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers 1070-02-01, 02, 03 & 04.  
  
Reason – For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.
3. Occupation of the residential accommodation shall be limited to persons employed at the Equestrian Centre, Melton Road, Langham, as identified on approved plan no.1070-02-01.  
  
Reason – The site of the permission is outside any area where planning permission would normally be forthcoming for residential development were it not for the special circumstances as set out in the application.

Advisory Note:

1. Road cleaning will need to be carried out during construction to ensure that the highway is kept clear of deleterious material.

## **Site & Surroundings**

1. The application site extends to some 3.1 hectares, within the open countryside, north of the village of Langham.
2. It had been used as a polo ground and associated livery stables until 2016. Planning permission (ref: 2016/0642/MAJ) was then granted on 18 October 2016 for the works necessary to enable a racehorse stabling and training facility to be relocated from its previous address in Nottinghamshire. These works are now complete and the racing stable is operational.
3. Consequently, in addition to a large area used as paddocks, the site now includes:
  - four barns used for stabling
  - a large ménage
  - three new horse walkers
  - an all-weather gallop
4. A detached dwelling within the south-east of the landholding is now occupied by the proprietor of the racing stables.
5. The site is generally flat, with access taken from Melton Road. Other than the all-weather gallop, the stables and other facilities are all located at the west of the site, and open to only limited view from public areas.

## **Proposal**

6. The current application proposes a single storey chalet style block of 120 square metres intended to provide living accommodation for seven members of staff. The applicant's Design and Access Statement describes this as a "lightweight temporary accommodation block". The facility includes seven single bedrooms, two bathrooms and a shared kitchen/living area.
7. Three such blocks (providing accommodation for a total of 21 members of staff) were initially included in the 2016 planning application, but were then deleted from the scheme when advised that such new residential accommodation in the countryside is contrary to policy.

## **Relevant Planning History**

<b>Application</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Decision</b>
FUL/2007/1078	Change of use from agriculture to equestrian, and erection of american barn stabling for polo ponies	Approved 05-02-2008
2016/0642/MAJ	Construction of two additional barns, three horse exercisers and an all-weather gallop, with change of use of land at the north-west of the site from agriculture into an extension to the equestrian centre (for use as part of the gallop).	Approved 18-10-2016

# **Planning Guidance and Policy**

## **National Planning Policy Framework**

- Section 3      The Rural Economy
- Section 6      Residential Development
- Section 7      Design

## **The Rutland Core Strategy (2011)**

- Policy CS1      Sustainable Development
- Policy CS3      Settlement Hierarchy
- Policy CS4      Location of Development
- Policy CS16      The Rural Economy
- Policy CS19      Design

## **Site Allocations and Policies DPD (2014)**

- Policy SP1      Sustainable Development
- Policy SP6      Housing in the Countryside
- Policy SP15      Design

Appendix 1      Agricultural, Forestry and other Occupational Dwellings

## **Consultations**

8.      Langham Parish Council  
The need for this accommodation is accepted, but should be used by employees of the stables, should be subject to a landscaping condition, and should be removed if the use of the site were to change.
9.      Highway Authority  
No objection, subject to an advisory note regarding road cleaning during construction.

## **Neighbour Representations**

10.     One letter received, asking that a sustainable drainage system be installed to address surface water run-off.

## **Planning Assessment**

11.     The main issue is the principle of such residential development within the open countryside. Other matters are then addressed at the end of the report.

## **Principle of residential use**

12.     Development Plan policies impose very strict control over new residential development in the countryside. The key policy is SP6 which specifies that new residential development should only be permitted in the rural area if it provides either affordable housing to meet a defined local need, or new housing to meet the operational needs of an established rural enterprise.
13.     In this case, the proposed residential development would be in accordance with this policy if it were accepted that the racing stables is a rural business and that the proposed accommodation is essential to its operation.

14. After due consideration of the applicant's supporting documents, it can be accepted that the commercial stables are an established rural enterprise. Although it has been operational on this site for only for a few months, it is accepted that such a facility, requiring an extensive area of land and potentially able to accommodate up to 120 horses, could not reasonably be located in a town or village.
15. In then assessing whether the residential accommodation is essential to the operation of the business, careful consideration must be given to Appendix One of the Site Allocations DPD. This sets out the detailed criteria for assessing potential agricultural workers dwellings and then specifies, in its paragraph 15, that the same criteria should be applied to other occupational dwellings “.....in a manner and to the extent that they are relevant to the nature of the enterprise concerned.”
16. In this case, the functional and financial tests applied to agricultural workers accommodation to ensure that there is a genuine need for someone to be resident on the premises, and that the farm enterprise can support the associated cost, are not relevant to the very different (non-agricultural) rural business on the current application site. Instead, this use requires an assessment of whether the stabling and associated facilities for up to 120 racehorses has its own operational need for staff to be resident on the premises.
17. The applicant's supporting documentation specifies that such premises must be licenced by the British Horse Racing Association (BHRA) which requires that the horses are monitored on a 24 hour basis. A supporting letter from the Association specifies that “....it is therefore considered essential that the trainer and as many responsible employees as required by the size of the operation should be present at the yard at all times. This necessitates suitable accommodation overlooking the yard and the entrance.” The letter then goes on to emphasise fire risk and security.
18. In his other supporting documents, the applicant acknowledges that the earlier proposal for 21 of his staff to be resident on site (before its deletion from the previous application) was intended to address the absence of low rental accommodation in the area. Such accommodation is required because most staff are young stable hands or grooms. In support of the current application, he now specifies that “....it is only absolutely critical to have seven people on site at all times, together with the applicant living in the property at the south east of the premises, to deal with the requirements of the operation” He also advises that cctv can be used to alert staff to any overnight problems within the stables; the practicalities of dealing with a potentially distressed racehorse then requires a minimum of five people to deal with the situation. He suggests that a lesser number may not be adequate and could potentially put the staff and horse at some risk. Finally, he advises that the proprietor's dwelling at the south-east of the site is too distant from the stables to provide this level of overnight cover.
19. Having considered all these factors, it is accepted that an on-site residential presence is necessary for a racing stables of this size.
20. Should permission be granted, the applicant has suggested that a condition be imposed to limit use of the accommodation to the current operation, and that the permission would cease if there were ever a change of use. A condition should not be used to limit such permission to a specific business, but it can be used to link the residential accommodation to the use of the site, thereby addressing the specific reason why residential use is being approved despite its variance from policy. Recommended Condition 3 imposes this control and therefore ensures that there is no abuse of the exception to the normal policy of restricting residential development on the countryside.

21. Although described by the applicant as a lightweight temporary structure, it is not necessary to consider a temporary permission, as any decline in its condition and appearance would not have much impact on the character of the countryside, given its proximity to other functional timber buildings on the site, and its distance from public viewpoints.

## **Other Considerations**

22. There are no ecology, archaeology or heritage issues to address. Access is available via the main site entrance on Melton Road, which is acceptable to the Highway Authority. An approval of this application is also likely to reduce traffic levels as seven members of staff would no longer need to travel to and from their employment.
23. There are no concerns regarding the visual impact of the proposal or its consequent impact on the character of the countryside. Such potential impact is lessened by the proximity to existing stables and the distance from public viewpoints. The use of timber and a tiled roof is also acceptable within his context. Consequently, there is no need for a further condition to secure approval of the details of these external materials. For the same reason, and contrary to the views of the parish council, there is no justification for a landscaping condition.
24. The comments from a nearby resident regarding drainage are noted. However, no further action is required, given the limited additional development within the context of extensive areas of free draining soil within the wider site.
25. There are no other issues to consider, and no matters that dissuade from the recommendation.