

Report to	<b>Planning Committee</b>
Date	<b>14 February 2011</b>
By	<b>Head of Planning</b>
Local Authority	<b>Brighton &amp; Hove City Council</b>
Application Number	<b>BH2010/02225</b>
Application	<b>Outline application some matters reserved – Outline application for proposed riding school, livery facility and ancillary staff office and accommodation</b>
Address	<b>The Boneyard Drove Road Brighton</b>
Purpose of Report	<b>This report relates to a proposal to erect equestrian facilities and associated residential accommodation on a site near Woodingdean. The purpose of this report is to gain members' agreement to comments to be submitted to Brighton &amp; Hove City Council on the application.</b>

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**Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to submit the following comments to Brighton & Hove City Council:**

- **The South Downs National Park Authority considers that the removal of the existing buildings and hardstanding on the site would be a benefit. However, it is not clear which of these buildings were lawfully constructed for an equestrian use and the proposal would result in an intensification of use, along with the introduction of unjustified residential uses, resulting in a scale of development that would detract from the character and appearance of a vulnerable and sensitive part of the National Park. This would neither conserve nor enhance the protected landscape.**
- **In addition, there would be a potential impact of increased traffic to and from the site on users of the public right of way that passes along Drove Road.**
- **Finally, any application for equestrian use of the site should include the surrounding land so that the overall implications of granting of permission could be understood.**
- **Accordingly, the South Downs National Park Authority objects to the proposals.**

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## **1. Background**

- 1.1 This urban fringe site is on the North side of a track known as Drove Road, to the north-west of Woodingdean. There is open land to the north, east and west. To the south (across Drove Road) is Downland Road, which is part of the developed area of Woodingdean and predominantly consists of bungalows. The site (which at one time was used as a knacker's yard) currently contains a number of ramshackle buildings including two large barns and a number of makeshift stable buildings set around a concrete yard.

## **2. The Proposals**

- 2.1 The total site area extends to 5.35 ha. However, the application relates to the part of the site containing the existing buildings, which measures 0.52 ha and excludes the surrounding open land. The proposal is for the demolition of the existing buildings on the site and their replacement with 40 stables, a small combined staff office, tack store room, feed stores, two bed staff flat and a Manager's dwelling.

- 2.2 A block containing 26 of the proposed stables would form three sides of a courtyard. The 4-bed Manager's dwelling would face over the courtyard, located on the side of one of the existing barns. The concrete hardstanding in the existing yard would be replaced with a permeable surface in the new courtyard. To the north-east would be three more stable buildings, containing 2, 4 and 8 stables respectively. Adjacent to the access drive from Drove Road would be a two storey building containing the tack store, office and 2-bed staff flat.
- 2.3 The proposed materials would include sweet chestnut to the stabling, with cedar shingles and the two storey buildings would have sweet chestnut to the upper storeys with facing brick to the lower sections and plain clay tiles to the roofs.
- 2.4 Access to the site would be from Drove Road, which connects with Warren Road 400 metres away, close to Brighton racecourse. The proposed use would be associated with an existing stable complex (Ingleside Yard) a little to the west.

### 3. Assessment

- 3.1 The proposal site is in a sensitive urban fringe location within the South Downs National Park. National Parks have two statutory purposes which must be taken into account when considering planning proposals that could have an impact upon the National Park:
1. *'To conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage'.*
  2. *'To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of these special qualities.'*
- If there is a conflict between these two policies, then the first must take precedence. National Park Authorities also have a duty in pursuing those purposes:
- 'To seek to foster the economic and social well being of local communities within the National Park'.*
- 3.2 The existing site is very untidy and the removal of the existing buildings and breaking up of the concrete hardstanding would be a benefit. However, the benefits of tidying up the site will need to be weighed up against the impacts of the proposed development. In addition it is not clear how many of the existing buildings (especially the equestrian buildings and uses) on the site are in fact authorised, which is of relevance in the way the current proposals are viewed.
- 3.3 The introduction of 40 stables is therefore a concern – it would lead to a more intensive use of the site (whether or not the existing use is lawful), particularly as the proposed stables would be used as a riding school and livery. This intensification of use would also result in additional vehicle traffic along the Drove Road, which is an unmetalled public right of way. There is little space on either side of the track to avoid vehicles and potential conflicts with users of this Public Right of Way is therefore a valid concern.
- 3.4 Although the proposal is for a livery and riding school, the surrounding open land (which is in the same ownership) is not included within the application. There is some evidence of grazing, but the City Council have confirmed that there is not an established permission (or an application) for the use of this land in relation to the keeping of horses. For the principle of a 40-stable livery and riding school to be accepted, the impacts on adjoining Public Rights of Way would need to be assessed, and pressures would be higher if the adjoining land were not used in association with the proposed activities. On the other hand, the visual impact of any further subdivision of this land would need to be considered.
- 3.5 The proposals also include a large Manager's dwelling and a separate building containing a tack room, office and 2-bed staff accommodation. As the site lies within the countryside, special justification is needed for the provision of new dwellings. Whilst the need for a dwelling for an equestrian worker's dwelling can sometimes justify the construction of a new house, this would only be if the need were assessed against (and met) a series of tests in PPS7. Of particular importance is the need to establish that the dwelling is to be used in association with an established, viable enterprise. No such justification appears to have been included in the proposals.
- 3.6 In addition, there is not enough information to explain why, even if an identified need exists, the dwelling and worker's accommodation must both be provided on the site. Given the

proximity to the outlying urban areas of Brighton (including Woodingdean, Bevendean and Whitehawk), there would seem to be alternative accommodation within a reasonable distance. The applicants state that the creation of on-site accommodation for employees will reduce the need to travel to work, but again, there are existing urban areas within a short distance of the site. Whilst on-site accommodation can sometimes be considered necessary for animal welfare reasons, this would not justify two dwellings.

- 3.7 The visual impact of the dwelling and workers flats must also be taken into account. Both of these are two storey buildings and would be the most prominent buildings on the site in views from across the valley. The fact that two existing barns would be removed should be taken into account when considering this. However they have a small scale agricultural appearance, different to the appearance of new dwellings on the hillside. Therefore, without the justification for the buildings (as outlined in the above paragraphs), the impact of the new dwellings can not be considered acceptable.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 Although the removal of the existing buildings from the site would be a benefit, it is not clear which, if any, were lawfully constructed and the proposal would result in an intensification of use, along with the introduction of unjustified residential uses, resulting in a scale of development that would detract from the character and appearance of a vulnerable and sensitive part of the National Park. This would neither conserve nor enhance the protected landscape. In addition, there would be a potential impact of increased traffic to and from the site on users of the public right of way that passes along Drove Road. Finally, any application for equestrian use of the site should include the surrounding land so that the overall impact of the proposals can be fully understood before a decision is made.

- 4.2 It is therefore recommended that the South Downs National Park Authority object to the proposals.

#### **5. Resources**

- 5.1 There are potential implications for staff resources should the application go to appeal.

#### **6. Risk management**

- 6.1 The risks of costs being awarded against the National Park Authority at appeal are low, providing the National Park Authority does not act unreasonably. The recommendation that is presented the Committee is considered by your officers to be reasonable.

#### **7. Human Rights, Equalities, Health and Safety**

- 7.1 As the National Park Authority is not the determining authority there are no implications for the Authority arising out of the application.

#### **8. External Consultees**

- 8.1 South Downs Joint Committee Central Area Manager

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