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**TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990**

**SHELFSIDE HOLDINGS LTD**

**PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

**PARK FARM  
NORTHAW ROAD WEST  
NORTHAW  
EN6 4NT**

**Retention of 8 No. floodlights, ménage and stables**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Design and Access statement is submitted in support of a planning application by Shelfside Holdings Ltd for the retention of 8No. floodlights, ménage and stables. The statement is divided into 4 main sections dealing with the following issues:

- Application Site and Site History
- Planning Policy Context
- The Proposal
- Design and Access
- Conclusions

1.2 The design and access elements together form the basis for the Design and Access Statement. This is set out in the format recommended within the CABE document "Design and Access Statements – How to Write and Read and Use Them".

1.3 The site and surrounding area falls within land designated as "Green Belt". The site and surrounding land is currently in equestrian use and comprises of a series of stables, ménages, paddocks and barns typical of this type of use.

1.4 The site sits on the southern side of Northaw Road West in between the villages of Northaw and Cuffley. The northern part of the site which is closest to Northaw Road West is defined by a hedge together with the main wall and gates defining the entrance to Park Farm itself. The site then falls away from the road frontage with the Northaw Brook lying in the valley to the south. The entire land holding includes land on both sides of Northaw Road West and amounts to some 104.4Ha.

- 1.5 The site forms part of a well established and popular equestrian centre and riding school (Northaw Manor Equestrian Centre). The establishment is an important local employer providing for full and part time opportunities for the community.
- 1.6 The site has been the subject of a number of previous applications. These are summarised in Chapter 2 of this statement. Chapter 3 assesses the planning policies which are applicable to the proposal whilst Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the proposal and Design and Access issues.
- 1.7 This application is for the retention of 8No. floodlights, a ménage and a group of 4No. small stable blocks in the main yard area numbered A-D on the site plan. The application submission follows a meeting on site with the enforcement officer and a subsequent letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> August 2013 inviting the submission of a series of applications to rectify alleged breached of planning control. An application to retain 2 stable blocks, an office and an area of hardsurfacing has already been lodged and is awaiting registration.

## 2 SITE HISTORY

- 2.1 Planning permission for the use of the site as livery stables and riding school with ménage was granted in 1995 under ref. S6/1995/0545/FP. The full planning history of the site is set out below:

S6/2009/0666/FP – Erection of replacement dwelling following demolition of existing dwelling. Refused.

S6/2006/1123/AG – Erection of open fronted barn for storage of hay. Approved.

S6/1995/0545/FP – Permanent use as livery stables and riding school with ménage (variation to condition 1 of Planning Permission S6/0319/93/FP which restricted permission to temporary period). Approved.

S6/1995/0089/FP – Erection of flood lighting to existing ménage. Approved.

S6/1993/0319/FP – Use of existing stables (with permission for stabling bloodstock horses) for livery and riding school and formation of ménage (exercise area). Approved.

S6/1992/0238/FP – Change of use of a) an agricultural workshop and b) an agricultural barn, for the stabling of bloodstock horses. Approved.

S6/1991/0957/FP – Single storey rear extension. Approved.

S6/1991/0362/FP – Erection of car port and entrance porch. Refused. Appeal – porch allowed; car port dismissed (would appear the carport may have been later built under permitted development)

S6/1991/0371/FP – Single storey side extension. Refused. Appeal dismissed.

S6/1988/0301/FP – Erection of detached garage. Approved.

S6/1987/0013/FP – Detached agricultural workers dwelling with parking space. Approved.

S6/1985/0390 – Site for dwelling for agricultural worker. Refused.

S6/1980/0044 – Change of use of farm buildings to dwellings for agricultural workmen. Approved.

S6/1980/0043 – Cattleyard and storage building for beef unit. Approved.

S6/1979/0720/LB – Demolition of house. Approved.

S6/1979/0151 – Demolition of existing building and erection of new dwellinghouse. Refused.

S6/1974/0646 – Change of use of farm buildings to dwellings for agricultural workmen. Approved.

- 2.2 Application ref. S6/1995/0089/FP was the original permission for floodlighting. This granted permission for 3No. floodlights up to a maximum height of 5 metres. The officer report states as follows:

*“The equestrian centre is an acceptable use in the Green Belt as it relates to recreational activity. It would seem reasonable to allow lighting to extend winter use into early evening.”*

### 3 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

#### i) National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.1 Paragraph 208 of Annex 1 confirms that the policies in the Framework apply from the day of publication and that they are material considerations which local planning authorities should take into account from this date (paragraph 2.11). For 12 months from the day of publication, decision takers may continue to give full weight to relevant policies adopted since 2004 even if there is a limited degree of conflict with the Framework (paragraph 214). This date has now past, expiring at the end of March.
- 3.2 Following this 12 month period, due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the Framework. It states that “...*the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given.*” (Paragraph 215).
- 3.3 At paragraph 14 it is stated that at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. In this respect, development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the Framework as a whole, or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted. In paragraph 17, twelve ‘core planning principles’ are outlined, including, ‘*always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings*’.

3.4 Chapter 9 concerns protecting Green Belt land. Paragraph 79 states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. Paragraph 80 confirms that Green Belt serves five purposes:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

3.5 Paragraph 81 states that local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access and to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation (my emphasis).

3.6 Paragraph 89 states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this include:

- Provision of appropriate (my emphasis) facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- The extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
- Limited infilling or the partial or complete reconstruction of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use

(excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.

3.7 The wording of this part of national guidance has changed from previous national guidance which regarded sport and recreation buildings as being appropriate only if they were small in scale and ancillary to the sport and recreation activity being carried out in the Green Belt.

3.8 Chapter 8 is concerned with promoting healthy communities. Paragraph 70 states as follows:

*“To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and serve the community needs, planning policies should:*

- *Plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.”*

**ii) Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 (saved policies)**

3.9 Policy RA24 is concerned specifically with riding and livery stables. It states that small scale riding and livery stables will be permitted (my emphasis) subject to meeting the following criteria:

- i) Impact on the Green Belt;
- ii) The number, size, height and materials of buildings proposed;
- iii) The relationship to existing buildings and the surrounding area;
- iv) The effect on neighbouring properties – noise and smell;

v) The effect on environmental assets such as wildlife;

vi) Considerations of the standards for the safety and comfort of horses.

3.10 Supporting text confirms that riding is an important leisure activity in the district and that there is continuing demand for the development of stabling facilities. Wherever possible there should be direct links to the bridleway network.

#### 4 THE PROPOSAL

4.1 The application submission follows informal discussions between the owners representative and Council officers. Officers requested that an application be submitted for the following:

- 4No. stable buildings
- 8No floodlights
- A new ménage

4.2 The 4No. stable buildings provide accommodation for 15No. horses in total. The buildings are timber cladded with felt covered shallow pitched roofs in keeping with existing stable buildings in the same complex. Blocks A and B are the two buildings referred to by the Council as being at 'right angles' to one another near the site entrance. Building C is to the west of the stable yard and Building D is behind the lower barn. The stables are not in contravention of the restrictive condition imposed under planning permission ref.S6/95/0545 which states that no more than 8 horses be stabled for the purposes of riding school instruction.

4.3 The new ménage (north ménage) is located close to the Northaw Road West road frontage. It has dimensions of 20m x 37m. It is unlit and its use is therefore restricted to daylight hours. The floodlights are positioned on the southern ménage further away from the road frontage. The floodlights are positioned around the outside of the ménage and are the minimum number required to light the ménage (the consented 3 being found to be inadequate). The floodlit ménage is located such that it would not harm the amenities of properties located along Northaw Road west due to the distance and topography of the site (the land is at a much lower level than Northaw Road West).

4.4 The officer report for application ref. S6/2012/2461/FP established many of the principles which the Council are trying to achieve at this establishment. These include:

- The rearing and riding of horses is an outdoor sport and recreational activity for which the development of stables is considered appropriate in order to support this use;
- New buildings should not be in an elevated position where they will appear most prominent;
- The 12No. stables proposed can reasonably be considered as small scale in the context of the scale of operations at Park Farm and the extent of the applicant's landholding.
- The materials are considered to be acceptable.
- There are no highway objections including the use of the neighbouring road by horses.

4.5 This application proposal would not be in conflict with any of these principles. The proposal is entirely for outdoor sport and recreation which is an appropriate use. The buildings are well related to the existing complex. The ménage does not have any built development above ground level and is not lit. The stables could be reasonably described as being 'small in scale' and the materials reflects existing stable buildings on the site. The views of the highway authority are noted.

4.6 In terms of policies, the most relevant considerations are Policy RA24 of the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. Policy RA24 is met in the following way:

- i) Impact on the Green Belt – The new stable buildings are either within or directly adjacent to the existing main stable yard and therefore have limited material impact on the Green Belt. The floodlights are lightweight structures which again have minimal impact.

- ii) The number, size, height and materials of buildings proposed – The stable buildings reflect the height and materials of existing structures. Previous proposals have only caused concern when they have been for proposals in elevated positions and distant from the complex.
- iii) Relationship to existing buildings and the surrounding area / landscape – The stables are positioned within or adjacent to the farm complex.
- iv) Effect on neighbouring properties – The stables and floodlights are all distant from existing properties. The ménage is for daytime use only and is located on a part of the site that is already in equestrian use.
- v) Impact on wildlife – Officers previously concluded that there would not be any harmful impact. The stables are located in existing built parts of the site and there will therefore not be any harm to wildlife.
- vi) Safety and Comfort of horses – No objections were previously raised in this respect. The site has access to paddocks and bridleways as previously accepted by the Council.

4.7 In conclusion, the stables, ménage and floodlights are considered to be 'appropriate' facilities for outdoor sport and recreation within the context of the NPPF. The proposal is also in compliance with policy RA24.

## 5 DESIGN AND ACCESS

- 5.1 Use: The application proposal provides for 4No. stable blocks, a ménage and 8No. floodlights.
- 5.2 Amount: The new buildings provide for 15No. stables and ancillary storage.
- 5.3 Layout: The new buildings are located within or adjacent to the stable complex.
- 5.4 Scale: The buildings are of a low scale and massing with a maximum ridge height of 2.84m.
- 5.5 Landscaping: No landscaping has been removed apart from a small amount of grass in connection with the ménage.
- 5.6 Appearance: The buildings are designed to blend into the countryside location. The wooden cladded buildings will easily assimilate themselves into the locality.
- 5.7 Access: Access into the site is unchanged and is from Northaw Road West. The retained hardsurfaced area will provide space for parking and turning of equestrian related vehicles and visitors. The site has between 10-30 visitors per day.

## 6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The application should be supported for the following reasons:

- i) The proposal constitutes 'appropriate' facilities for outdoor sport and recreation in the Green Belt in accordance with the NPPF. The proposal has been assessed against policy RA24 and is in compliance. The Council have not previously raised concerns in relation to materials, need, impact on wildlife / comfort of horses / highways.
- ii) The stables and floodlights are all located a substantial distance away from neighbouring properties in Northaw Road West. The ménage is restricted to daylight hours and will not affect amenity. The stables adjacent to the ménage are proposed under a separate application to be relocated closer to the built complex. The ménage does not have a material impact on openness and will not be read as being prominent as it is at ground level.