

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 5 JANUARY 2017
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (GOVERNANCE)

6/2016/1953/FULL

WARRENWOOD MANOR, HORNBEAM LANE, BROOKMANS PARK, HATFIELD,
AL9 6JF

RETENTION OF SINGLE STOREY EQUESTRIAN STORAGE BARN

APPLICANT: Mr Nigel Brunt

(Hatfield East)

1. Site Description

- 1.1 The application site is located approximately 2km to the south of the village of Essendon. It forms part of the wider Warrenwood site which extends to 24.05ha.
- 1.2 Access to the site is via Hornbeam Lane which serves the site, a number of cottages and also forms a public bridleway. The wider site comprises of a dwellinghouse and associated buildings including a garage, to the south of Hornbeam Lane, which serves the site.
- 1.3 The application site is to the north of this lane and comprises of the proposed equestrian storage barn together with an existing 16 box stable building, open horse walker and associated fencing located to the rear of the stable building. The remaining land surrounding the site is predominately arable and equestrian, although to the south is a manège and area of hardstanding and an area of land that is required to be remodelled. Both of which do not have the appropriate planning permission.

2. The Proposal

- 2.1 This application seeks planning permission for the retention of the single storey equestrian storage barn.
- 2.2 The proposed storage barn is located to the front of the existing 16 box stable building, which does not form part of this application. It has a ridge height of approximately 4m and eaves height of 2.4m, a width of 12m and a maximum depth of 6m. It is constructed as an open sided structure built with four open bays and from timber materials with a pitched roof. It is constructed as a traditional cart shed with oak framing over a facing brick base with light stained weatherboarding and plain clay tiles roof.

- 2.3 The barn is required to accommodate bales of straw and hay for the adjoining stables and also sawdust and manège sand together with tractors and equipment associated with the equestrian use of the land and stables.
- 2.4 This application follows a recently refused application (S6/2015/1105/FP) that related to the retention of the single storey storage barn together with the open horse walker and its associated fencing to the rear of the existing stable building. This application has sought to overcome the refusal of that previous application, which was associated with Green Belt, and now includes a fuller justification to seek to demonstrate the necessary very special circumstances.
- 2.5 Whilst this application does not include the open horse walker and its associated fencing to the rear of the site, application S6/2015/1105/FP did not find that these elements of the proposal conflicted with either national planning policy or local policy. Subsequently, whilst Members at a previous Development Management Committee Meeting determined that enforcement action should be sought for the removal of the existing storage barn, the subject of this application, it was accepted that no enforcement action would be taken for the open horse walker or the associated fencing.

3. Reason for Committee Consideration

- 3.1 This application is presented to the Development Management Committee because Councillor Dean has called the application in on the following reasons;

'This structure cannot be seen from any other property in the area and indeed fits perfectly into the surrounding landscape'.

4. Relevant Planning History

- 4.1 Previously called Meadow Cottage, and also known locally as 'Spike Island'. Spike Island and the adjacent land were purchased by Andrew Perryment (Rose Limited) in 1998.
- 4.2 S6/1998/129/AG Barn for general storage purposes in connection with the agricultural use of the land – Determined no objection and no further details required 09 Mar 1998.
- 4.3 S6/1999/372/FP Change of use of land to equestrian with associated ménage, rides and landscaping – approved 09 Aug 1999.
- 4.4 S6/1999/993/FP 24 timber loose boxes on concrete bases for equestrian use – refused 04 Jan 2000. Reported to PCC 06 Apr 2000 when enforcement authorised.
- 4.5 S6/2000/1492/FP Erection of 20 box stable building – refused 05 Jan 2001 but approved after appeal lodged against non-determination within 8 weeks.

- 4.6 S6/2009/2556/MA - Change of use to equestrian with associated manège, rides and landscaping – Granted conditionally on 21 January 2010.
- 4.7 S6/2009/2574/FP - Erection of new dwelling, three bay garage block, garden store together with retention and alteration of the existing stables, landscaping and all other ancillary works, following demolition of partially constructed dwelling, adjoining stables and garage blocks - Granted conditionally in January 2010.
- 4.8 ENF/2015/0004 – Operational development/MCOU – Open enforcement investigations relating to the erection of 24 floodlights on 8 poles around manège, use of site for commercial livery, use of stables for residential purposes and importation of waste.
- 4.9 S6/2015/1105/FP - Retention of single storey storage barn, open horse walker and associated fencing. Refused August 2016 and enforcement action authorised.
- 4.10 S6/2015/1106/FP - Retention of parking area for cars and horseboxes, horse holding area and manège area with associated fencing and lighting. Refused August 2016 and under enforcement action authorised.
- 4.11 S6/2015/1107/FP- Retention of modified land levels and further land remodelling to agreed contours. Refused August 2016 and enforcement action authorised.

5. Planning Policy

- 5.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) March 2012
- 5.2 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005
- 5.3 Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005
- 5.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards, January 2004
- 5.5 Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission: August 2016

6. Site Designation

- 6.1 The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt, Brickendon Wooded Slopes Landscape Character Area and Wildlife Site as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

7. Representations Received

- 7.1 The application has been advertised by means of neighbour notification letters and site notice. One comment has been received from Follyfoot Farm, Woodfield Lane which can be summarised as;

- Objects to the application as there is already a large storage area for feed and hay on the right hand side of the stables;
- The applicant says that the door is not wide enough to fit the largest hay bales into, however we believe that if the door is made larger then the biggest hay bales can fit through or they could buy any of the smaller bales;
- Above the stables there is a storage area that could be used to store bales which could be loaded/unloaded via a tele handler; and
- This storage area was added to the original stables for storage so why is it not used as such and how could it warrant further building in the green belt where there is perfectly adequate storage already.

8. Consultations Received

- 8.1 None undertaken. The previous application (S6/2015/1105/FP) consulted Hertfordshire County Council Transport Programmes and Strategy who raised no objections.

9. Parish Council Representations

- 9.1 Essendon Parish Council state that; *'The application was discussed at a recent meeting of the Planning Committee where it was decided no comments were necessary to be made on this application'*.

10 Analysis

- 10.1 The main planning issues with this application are:

1. Principle of development in Green Belt (GBSP1, RA10, RA21, SDG and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF))

2. The quality of the design (D1, RA21, SDG and NPPF)

3. Other Material Planning Considerations

i) Highway and Parking (M14, RA21 and SPG)

ii) The potential impact on the residential amenity of adjoining neighbours (D1, R19, RA21, SDG and NPPF)

iii) Biodiversity (R15, RA21 and NPPF)

v) Existing buildings to be re-used (RA21)

1. Principle of development in Green Belt

- 10.2 The site is within the Green Belt wherein only specified developments will be permitted. The lawful use of the application site is as an equestrian use which was granted permission from application S6/2009/2556/MA. That application granted planning permission for a change of use of land to equestrian with associated manège rides and landscaping. Additionally, the existing stable block located within the red edge of the application site, was originally granted planning permission under application reference S6/2009/2574/MA and latterly under S6/2012/2656/MA. That stable building however has not been built in accordance with the approved plans, although it is not the subject of this application. Nevertheless, the approved stable block was conditioned to

be used for a non commercial use and only in conjunction with the residential development to the south of the site to restrict the use of the building to one compatible with the area and to minimise the intensity of use of the site. The applicant has confirmed to officers that the stables are used for stabling the applicant's horses together with those of some friends and is not in use as a commercial livery. The Council have no evidence to dispute this. If however, as outlined in *Welwyn Hatfield Council v. SoSCLG & Beesley (2011)* in an appropriate case the principle of public policy is that a person should not benefit from their own wrong. It [the wrong doing] can therefore be relied upon to defeat [i.e. refuse] an application, in that case, for a certificate of lawful use. Therefore, in the event that it is found that the stable building is being used as a commercial livery or riding school, officers would have been deliberately misinformed and therefore enforcement action would be able to be taken if appropriate.

- 10.3 Paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that a Local Planning Authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this include the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- 10.4 Paragraph 79 of the NPPF identifies openness and their permanence as the essential characteristics of Green Belt whilst Paragraph 80 lists the five purposes of Green Belt. One of the five purposes includes; to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment which is considered the most relevant.
- 10.5 Policy RA21, Leisure and Tourism in the Countryside, of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, is applicable. It advises that proposals for recreational development, which may include changes of use in the countryside will be permitted subject to complying with certain criteria. Criteria i) and iii) of that policy state that;- the proposed use is in accordance with Green Belt policies; and that the proposed use would not have an adverse effect on the character and other environmental assets of the countryside, which echoes national policy listed above.
- 10.6 The proposed equestrian storage barn is located to the front of the existing stable building and sits alongside the boundary with Hornbeam Lane. The applicant outlines that the barn is required to accommodate straw, hay, sawdust and manège sand for the adjacent manège together with tractors and equipment associated with the equestrian use of the land and stables.
- 10.7 In line with the NPPF the building to be appropriate in the Green Belt must be an appropriate facility for outdoor sport and recreation. The English dictionary defines the word appropriate as '*suitable or proper in the circumstances*'. The existing equestrian use at the site equates to approximately 17.5 hectares of land. It includes the stable building which can accommodate 16 horses together with a ménage.

- 10.8 The proposed equestrian storage barn serves a building which provides for outdoor sport and recreation, and therefore it is concluded that in principle the provision of equestrian storage could amount to an essential and appropriate facility for outdoor sport and recreation.
- 10.9 The applicant has submitted a supporting statement outlining why the building is required together with a statement from the Manager of the Stables and an Appraisal from JSP Management Ltd.
- 10.10 The supporting statements advise that storage of hay and straw inside the stables is not possible, due to the lack of access for a mechanical load lifter together with the large size of the modern bales (measuring 2.4m x, 1.2m x 1.2m) and overall layout of the stables. It continues to claim that as a result hay and bedding has had to be kept outside under tarpaulin which has degenerated the materials and that management of the hay under tarpaulin has been both messy and difficult in winter months. Significant volumes of straw and hay are needed for the looseboxes, more so in winter when horses cannot go out in the fields or pasture.
- 10.11 The statements outline that the original stable building was produced in the 1990s and consent original granted in 2001. Not only was it largely unsuitable for taking the modern large bales of hay, health and safety advice has moved on and the need to avoid fire risks inside the stable is now paramount. The ménage itself consists of over 3000sqm of sand which has to be levelled and dragged, continually necessitating a tractor and specialist machinery to be stored close by on site as well as a supply of dry sand to attend to any boggy areas as they develop.
- 10.12 The report prepared by JSP outlines that;
- The stables are fully utilised with horses;
 - The existing use of all the rooms in the stables are essential for the running of a set of stables;
 - An average horse will consume 10kg of hay per day. Therefore a 700kg large bale of hay will last the stables 3.8 days. One 700kg bale of hay is 1.2m x 1.2m x 2.4m;
 - To ensure an adequate supply of feed for a stable, it is recommended to have at least a two month supply of hay available, measuring storage capacity for 16 bales;
 - For safety reasons large bales cannot be stored more than two high, so a floor space of 4m x 4.8m is needed;
 - Because the bales weigh 700kg, they must be stored in barns that have vehicular access to stack them;
 - Potentially bales could come in smaller more manageable size, but these are becoming harder to source as farmers do not make them because of the labour, storage and handling requirements. Also the smaller bales are not packed so tightly by the baler so extra storage space is needed.
 - A small bale to 0.45m x 0.35m x 0.9m and weighs 22kg. This means a large bale is 24 times the size, but weighs nearly 50% by comparison;

- Hay must always be stored in a structure with sufficient air flow around the stack to avoid overheating and the build-up of deadly mounds and funguses;
- The original storage area was not suitable for the purposes of hay storage, because they are too enclosed to allow air flow; and
- Because of the potential of overheating, it is never suitable to store hay in the same building as livestock.

10.13 That report concludes that *'hay is an essential food in the diet of a horse and high quality horses like those stables at the Warrenwood Manor Stables need it to be kept in the best quality possible. There are no storage areas suitable within the original stable complex for storage of hay and there are also no areas for storage of machinery within the original stable complex'*.

10.14 The permitted stable building can accommodate stabling for 16 horses, although the supporting statement states there are 18 horses kept on site, together with two tack rooms, a feed and hay store, office, store, staff rest room and toilet and shower facilities. A first floor is also within that building and a first floor plan of that building shows that there are two large hay stores, changing rooms, dry feed, chemical stores, blanket rooms, admin and further tack rooms.

10.15 The Council have sought professional equestrian advice with regard to the statements submitted from KWA Architects and Planning Consultants who specialise in equestrian architecture and planning. The Practice Principal has worked in the industry for over 30 years and is recognised as an expert in the field. Their response is summarised as;

'The view provided is that the principle of appropriate storage and management of hay bedding and feed is essential to an equestrian operation. Those supporting statements have demonstrated that appropriate storage of feed, bedding and machinery is essential on an equestrian development not least from a functional perspective but most importantly from a health and safety and welfare perspective; to avoid illness arising from dirty, damp or vermin ridden hay and bedding and to reduce the risk of contact between horses and machinery.'

However, unlike hay, feed and bedding storage, ménage surfacing is not required on a daily basis for the welfare of the horses kept on site. Whilst it is important to ensure that the ménage surfacing is regularly topped up, it would be more usual practice for this to be delivered as a bulk load and spread directly on to the ménage as and when needed (ie annually or bi-annually) rather than stored on site. If there are areas of the ménage which are prone to becoming boggy and require more regular topping up this would suggest a drainage issues with the ménage rather than a surfacing issue and should be investigated. It is therefore our view that the storage of ménage surfacing within the Proposed Storage Barn is not essential to the operation of the onsite activity.'

The applicant states that the storage of machinery to tend to the land is essential. With 13ha of land and just 16 horses the land will need to be appropriately tended to including grass cutting, spraying and hedgerow and tree management etc. It is not unusual for equestrian operations of this size to own their machinery in order to allow them to tend to the land appropriately all year around. It is accepted that the machinery required to carry out these operations is large, valuable and also vulnerable to the elements. It is therefore not unusual to provide undercover storage for the machinery reasonably required to tend to the land in order to prolong the life of it. On balance, it is therefore our view that the proposed storage of machinery within the storage barn can be considered essential to the operation of the facility.

It is widely accepted that stable yards do create an increased fire risk. The storage of hay, bedding and machinery all create potential fire hazards and we would agree with arguments presented in the supporting statement that it is best practice to provide a separate building for the storage of hay, bedding and machinery wherever possible, particularly when designing a new equestrian yard. However contrary to JSP's comments there are many yards which continue to incorporate integrated hay, bedding and feed storage for functional, financial, historic or other reasons. Whilst it is functionally preferable to have a separate storage barn appropriate management processes and fire safety systems can be implemented on yards which have internal storage to reduce the fire risk.

The supporting statement indicates that the separate storage area is required to minimise labour in handling the materials. However this appears to be a claim made in comparison to the provision of no onsite storage and not in comparison to other alternative. For example, integrated storage where both handling the materials and accessing the horses to feed them would be easier than with a separate storage area.

With regard to the size of the building, the calculations provided relating to the scale of hay bales and the ability to stack them and provide two months supply are considered reasonable and acceptable for the proper functioning of an equestrian development.

The storage of ménage surfacing is not considered essential and therefore overall the storage barn provides slightly more storage space than is deemed absolutely essential to the operation of the yard.

The scale of the storage facilities is required as set out in the Supporting Statement is considered both suitable and reasonable to meet the needs of the 16 horses stabled on site. However the provision of the separate storage barn is not considered to be essential. Although a separate storage barn may be desirable from a fire risk perspective, integrated storage continues to be provided on many equestrian yards as a fire risk and keeping the stables dust free can be appropriately managed. It is not essential to the operation of a yard for the storage to be separate.

Furthermore, the provision of a storage barn to meet the identified need in the Green Belt can only be considered appropriate and meeting Green Belt tests where there is no other provision serving the same outdoor sport and recreation facility. In this instance, the approved and as built drawings of the existing stable building, demonstrate significant provision of storage and ancillary rooms, far in excess of what would normally be considered essential for the functioning of a private equestrian premises of this size. There are two very large hay stores set out on the first floor with a further Feed and Hay Store provided on the ground floor which benefits from its own dedicated access via a set of double doors. Whilst the supporting statement claims the significant storage areas on the first floor cannot be utilised as there is no available access, this space could reasonably be used for alternative purposes to allow the ground floor area to provide the required storage. Whilst this claim is accepted, it is extremely surprising that anyone with a knowledge of equestrian operations would design, apply for planning permission and build a stable block with essential hay storage on the first floor without an appropriate access.

In conclusion it is considered that there is more than sufficient floor space within the existing Stable Block to provide the required level of storage and functional needs for the proper management of 16 horses. Although it is accepted that this will require internal remodelling and perhaps a revised access to the stable block'.

- 10.16 Therefore whilst it has been established that there is an in principle need for a storage facility for at least some of the materials referred to in the Supporting Statement, the Green Belt test requires that any new building is appropriate for outdoor sport or outdoor recreation. As outlined above, the building is not considered appropriate, as the needs could be met from the existing stable building on the site.
- 10.17 Further to the above, the NPPF also requires an assessment of the impact of the development to the openness and purposes of the Green Belt and Criteria i) and iii) of Policy RA21 of the District Plan echoes that stated in national policy. In this regard, the application site is an open piece of land where the permitted stable building is set back from Hornbeam Lane. The proposed storage barn is located alongside the boundary with that Lane. The area in which the store is located was originally free from built development which contributed to the openness of the Green Belt. The new building clearly reduces the openness of the site by virtue of the presence of built form.
- 10.18 Additionally with regard to the purposes of the Green Belt, the storage barn extends and spreads the existing built development on the site adding to the urbanising effects of the overall development in this rural location. The building is not well contained within the site, forward of the existing stable building and visible from Hornbeam Lane. This does not assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, one of the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

- 10.19 Accordingly the proposed store building is inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 10.20 In addition to the above harm identified, the Framework advises in Paragraph 81 the importance of retaining and enhancing the landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity of Green Belts. Chapter 7 of the NPPF emphasises the importance of good design in context and, in particular, paragraph 64 states permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to improve the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. Furthermore, as the site is located within Brickendon Wooded Slopes Landscape Character Area, Policy RA10 (Landscape Regions and Character Areas) is applicable which outlines that proposals for development in the rural area will be expected to contribute, as appropriate, to the conservation, maintenance and enhancement of the local landscape character of the area. Policy D2 (Character and Context) outlines that the Council will require all new development to respect and relate to the character and context of the area in which it is proposed.
- 10.21 The Welwyn Hatfield Landscape Character Assessment outlines that within Brickendon Wooded Slopes Landscape Character Area, there are extensive views out over wooded valleys and the Lea Valley to the north, where views out are frequently screened by small blocks of woodland or hedges. The key characteristics of the area include small ancient settlements, intricate road system, extensive broadleaf woodland, strongly undulating north facing landform, small woodland blocks and tall dense hedge and a very private area, with discreetly concealed parkland.
- 10.22 The application site is located within a rural landscape which is predominately agricultural, albeit the site is within an equestrian use. The proposed storage barn is prominent from surrounding views and provides no opportunity to retain and enhance landscapes or the visual amenity of the area. It introduces further built form to an area that is predominately rural with minimal built form. Whilst appreciated that the proposed storage barn would be located near to the existing stable building, the cumulative amount of built form at the site impacts on the rural character of the area, further urbanising the site and subsequently does not add to the context of the area in which it is proposed. This adds further harm to that identified above.
- 10.23 Whilst the applicant refers to the final section entitled 'Strategy and Guidelines for managing change; of the Welwyn Hatfield Landscape Character Assessment which states '*Ensure, via SPG if necessary, that developments in equine recreation respect the character of the area, especially in the detail of boundary treatments and buildings*'. As outlined in Section 2 below, it is considered that the building's design and appearance is appropriate. However, given the rural landscape, it does not respect the character of the area.
- 10.24 The Framework says that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 88 of the NPPF outlines that '*when considering*

any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations'. It is therefore necessary to consider whether the development causes any other harm and whether there are any other considerations relevant to the overall balance.

- 10.25 It is accepted in case law that there is no prescribed list of what might constitute very special circumstances. It may be that a single aspect of a proposal may itself be a very special circumstance (VSC) sufficient to justify development or it may be that a number of circumstances may cumulatively amount to very special circumstances. As Lord Justice Pill said in *South Bucks District Council v Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions* [2003] EWCA Civ 687, [2003] All ER (D) 250 (May): *"It is of the essence of very special circumstances that the applicant establishing them is in a very special category."*
- 10.26 The applicant therefore needs to show very special circumstances to justify the development in this location. Very special circumstances can arise from a combination of circumstances. It is necessary to balance all factors that weigh in favour of the grant of permission in each case against the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm. The harm to the Green Belt by reason of the inappropriate nature if the development is a factor to which substantial weight must be given. Additional harm has been identified to the openness, purposes and visual amenities of the Green Belt.
- 10.27 As outlined above the applicant has sought to justify the need of the proposal, however officers consider that this can be given limited weight as this need can be met from the existing stable building.
- 10.28 The applicant outlines in their supporting statement that *'the application site already contains a large stable block and the proposal would be a relatively small scale single storey building of a complementary appearance and finish to the existing stable block, and effectively contained by its presence and its location, is on an existing hardstanding within a courtyard (well screened at the back by a bank of mature trees) at the back of the stables and not in an isolated position encroaching on the openness of the countryside or visible within the wider landscape'.*
- 10.29 With regard to openness the applicant outlines that *'whilst it would increase the amount of built form, it would be so closely associated with the existing stable block, blend well with its surrounds and be so well screened by mature trees and hedgerow that it would not appear to have reduced openness. The proposed building would be a relatively inconspicuous and modest feature which would preserve the openness of the Green Belt'.*
- 10.30 In this instance, the impact to openness is not only about whether a proposal can be seen, but it is predominately about its physical presence on the site. The building has a physical presence on the site and as a result of its size this

is considered to materially impact on the openness. Additionally, it is considered that the building is not small scale and whilst there are no objections to its detailed appearance, it would extend the amount of built form on the site. Whilst the building is also on and surrounded by hardstanding, that hardstanding does not have the appropriate planning permission. Additionally with regard to the vegetation, whilst there is some around the site, the building is clearly visible from Hornbeam Lane together with views from the surroundings landscape. In any event, landscaping should not screen development that is otherwise considered unacceptable. Therefore it is considered that these considerations have very limited weight.

- 10.31 The applicant refers to the previous appeal decision at this site and that the conclusions on the previous application are unreasonable given that a much larger building was not deemed to be appropriate. That previous appeal decision related to application S6/2000/1492/FP for the construction of a 20 box stable building for equestrian use. Whilst that building was simply for equestrian use, the documents which accompanied it, and the site's history clearly indicated that the intention was to provide for the exercising and training of a string of polo ponies. That Inspector decided to take into account the size of the proposed facility relative to the size of the land served and the scale of the activity intended. He found that the building, whilst substantial would only be barely large enough for a polo string.
- 10.32 Whilst that building may have been larger than that on site, the Inspector clearly felt there was a need for it. In this instance, as outlined above, the proposed space can be accommodated within the existing stable building and there is no need for the additional storage barn. In any event, whilst that previously permitted stable building may have been larger, this proposal is separate from the existing stable building and as a result this spreads and extends built development and further urbanises the site. Accordingly officers consider that this appeal decision provides no weight in the determination of this application.
- 10.33 The applicant outlines that Policy RA24; Riding and Livery Stables, and RA1; Development in the Green Belt are applicable to this decision. However Policy RA24 is associated with the erection of riding and livery stables. Stables are defined as '*A **stable** is a building in which livestock, especially horses, are kept. It most commonly means a building that is divided into separate stalls for individual animals*'. The proposal is a storage barn and this policy is therefore not applicable. Policy RA1 is not a saved policy.
- 10.34 The application outlines that the Council's Supplementary Design Guidance states that new development should be located adjacent to or in proximity to existing buildings. The SDG outlines; '*Because the rural areas are covered by Green Belt designation there is little opportunity for new development and that which does take place should reflect the nature of its rural surroundings and settings. New development should be located adjacent to or in proximity to existing buildings to lessen the impact on the rural character of the area*'. As outlined above, the proposed development is inappropriate in the Green Belt, where further harm is caused to the openness, purposes and visual

amenity of the Green Belt. Whilst the proposed development may be in close proximity to the existing stable building, this does not outweigh the harm that has been identified.

- 10.35 Therefore having considered those factors that are found to weigh against the proposal against the considerations put forward by the applicant as weighing in favour of the development, would clearly outweigh the harm that the proposed development would cause. It is therefore considered that this consideration does carry significant weight in the context of this application. Therefore the justification put forward does outweigh the harm to the Green Belt such as to justify the development on the basis of very special circumstances.

2. The quality of the design

- 10.36 Local Plan Policies D1 (Quality of Design) aims to ensure a high quality of design. This policy is expanded upon in the Council's Supplementary Design Guidance (SDG) which requires the impact of a development to be assessed giving regard to the bulk, scale and design of the proposal. Furthermore, criterion (v) of Policy RA21 refers to new building reflecting the local rural character on terms of design, massing and materials. In addition, Chapter 7 of the NPPF emphasises the importance of good design in context.

- 10.37 The proposed development would form part of an existing equestrian use. It is a single storey, open sided traditional cart shed constructed of oak framing over a facing brick base with light stained weatherboarding and a plain clay tiled roof over.

- 11.38 Its overall design and appearance reflects the rural locality and is of an appearance that would be expected to be found in such a locality. Additionally the materials match those used on the main stable building.

- 10.39 Accordingly the proposed development is visually acceptable and satisfactory in design. The development therefore complies with the NPPF and policies D1 and RA21 (v) of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the adopted Supplementary Design Guidance.

3. Other Material Planning Considerations

- 10.40 *i) Highway and Parking (M14, RA21 and SPG)*
The proposed development is accessed via Hornbeam Lane and would not result in the need for any additional parking on site or impact to result in any significant harm in terms of highway safety.
- 10.41 *ii) The potential impact on the residential amenity of adjoining neighbours (D1, R19, RA21 and NPPF)*
Policies D1 and R19 and the Supplementary Design Guidance aim to preserve neighbouring amenity. In addition, guidance in paragraph 17 of the NPPF is to always seek to secure high quality design and good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupiers of land and buildings.

10.42 The site is located in a relatively secluded location some distance from other residential properties. Given the nature of the proposals, it is not considered that they cause any further impact to their residential amenity than the existing equestrian use. Accordingly no objections are raised with regard to Policies D1, R19 and RA21 of the Local Plan, the NPPF or the SDG.

10.43 *ii) Biodiversity (R15, RA21 and NPPF)*

The physical building works that are proposed as part of the development would not impact upon biodiversity (and wildlife sites) and is therefore acceptable.

10.44 *iii) Existing buildings to be re-used (RA21)*

Criteria (iv) of Policy RA21 outlines that existing buildings are reused if possible. In this instance, as outlined above, the existing stable building is able to be used for the storage associated with the equestrian use of the land. The proposal therefore also fails this criteria of Policy RA21.

11. **Conclusion**

11.1 The proposed storage barn would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and thus harmful to it, where additional harm is caused to the openness, the purposes and the visual amenity of the Green Belt. There are no other considerations apparent that would weigh in favour of the scheme which cumulatively or individually would outweigh the harm identified and warrant very special circumstances.

11.2 The impacts of the proposal have been considered on the amenity of neighbouring dwellings and on other relevant material considerations. It has been concluded that the proposal is acceptable in terms of the above. In those respects, the development is in accordance with relevant policies within the adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, the adopted Supplementary Design Guidance and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

12. **Recommendation**

12.1 It is recommended that planning permission be refused due to:

1. The site is designated as Green Belt in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan. The proposed storage barn does not constitute an appropriate facility for outdoor sport and recreation and does not preserve the openness of the Green Belt and conflicts with the purposes of including land within it. It is therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Additionally, the storage barn does not retain and enhance the rural landscape and visual amenity of this part of the Green Belt and subsequently does not enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt. The Local Planning Authority does not consider that there are any other considerations that exist that would clearly outweigh the harm by reason of its inappropriateness, and any other harm to justify the development on the basis of very special circumstances. Accordingly the proposed development is contrary to the

National Planning Policy Framework and Policies RA10, RA21 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the Council's Supplementary Design Guidance.

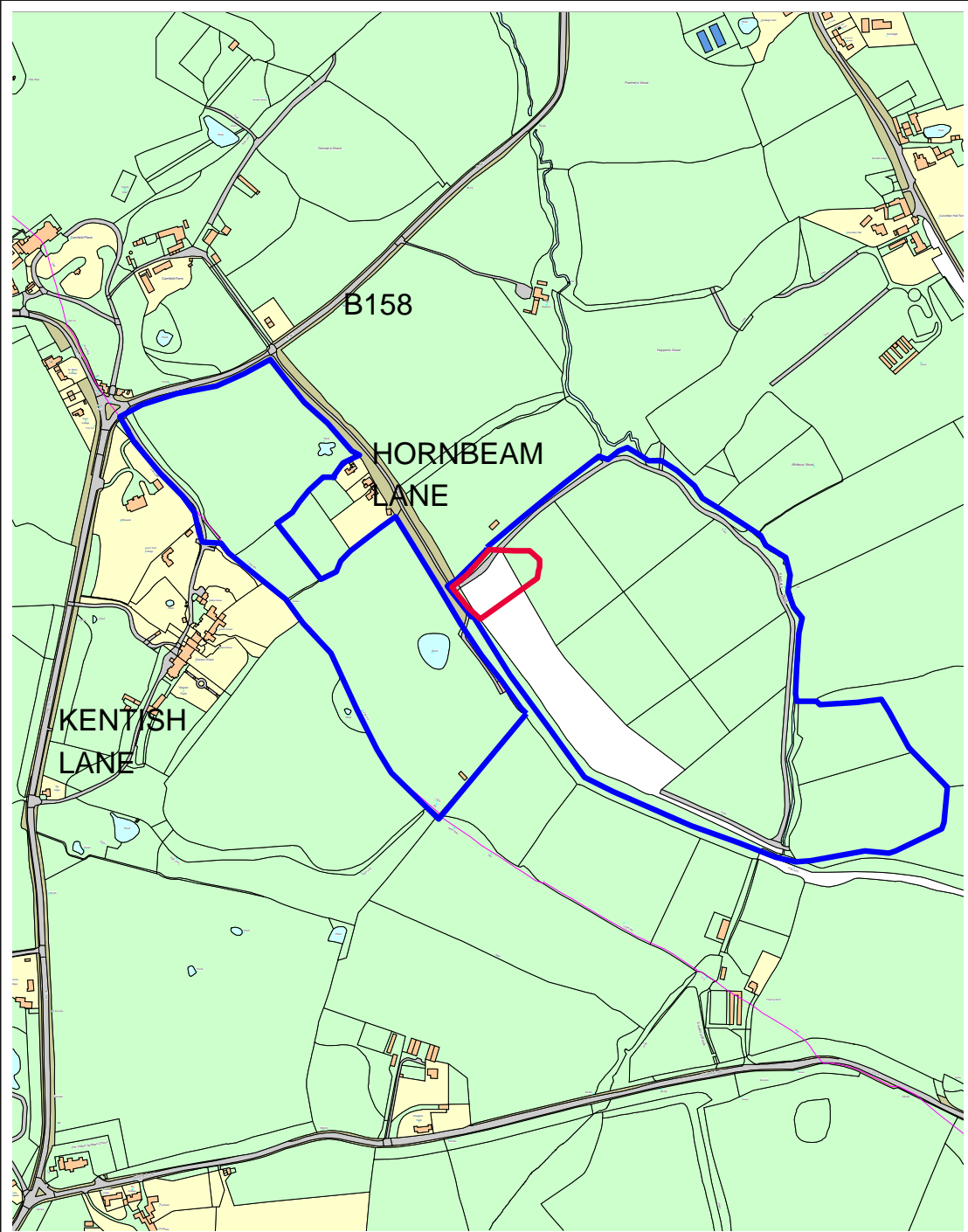
Positive and Proactive Statement


The decision has been made taking into account, where practicable and appropriate the requirements of paragraphs 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the development plan (see Officer's report which can be viewed on the Council's website or inspected at these offices).

Refused Drawing Numbers:

703/LP1 & 703/201 Rev A & 703/200 received 21 September 2016
Sarah Smith, (Strategy and Development)
Date 16/12/2016

Expiry Date: 16/11/2016



 Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts. AL8 6AE	Title: Warrenwood Manor, Hornbeam Lane, Brookmans Park		Scale: DNS
	Project: DMC Meeting		Date: 2016
		Drawing Number: 6/2016/1953/FULL	Drawn: Andrew Windscheffel
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