THE
RURAL PLANNING
PRACTICE



Planning Design & Access Statement

In support of a planning application for the development of an equestrian yard for a professional event and dressage rider

ADDRESS	New House Farm, Freehay, Cheadle, Stoke on Trent, ST10 1RD
ON BEHALF OF	Ms R Edge
PREPARED BY	The Rural Planning Practice
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1. Introduction

1.1. This planning application is made on behalf of Ruth Edge, who is a successful event and dressage rider to apply for a change of use of land and new buildings at New House Farm, Freehay. The development is for an equestrian yard with six boxes and ancillary storage, a sand school, horse walker, lunge pen and conversion of an existing building into groom's accommodation.

1.2. Freehay forms part of a rural hinterland with extensive areas nearby used for quarrying aggregates, mostly sand and gravel. The site is not within an area of landscape designation.



New House Farm marked on Google aerial map

2. Background

2.1. Ruth Edge, at the age of eight, had set her sights on competing at Badminton Horse Trials, a goal she achieved ten years later in 1998. Ruth went on to compete at sixteen four star events with four top ten placings including a win, before turning her competitive focus mainly on Dressage, a sport in which she had already carved an impressive reputation.

2.2. Born in August 1979 in Kent, Ruth spent her childhood riding all sorts of ponies. Her parents were farmers who left their home in Kent to live and work in Aberdeenshire where Ruth spent her teenage years.

2.3. Ruth built a great partnership with Ice Dancer, winning the Pony Club Championships in 1995 and fulfilling her Badminton dream in 1998 with a clear round. The pair also completed Burghley that year.

2.4. The following spring, with the help of longstanding backers Henry and Cathy Marriott, Ruth started her own business. 1999 proved to be a successful year: she completed another Badminton on Ice Dancer and won the coveted Young Rider National Championships at Bramham, this time riding Classic Wizard. Subsequently Ruth's northern roots led her to be based in Cumbria with owners, Hugh and Ann Lawson for eleven and a half years.

2.5. She then rode for Phil and Maureen Smith. The first notable achievement for the Smiths was when Two Thyme won the British Eventing Intermediate Championships at Gatcombe in 2002. Two Thyme went on to win the British Eventing Open Championships twice, a title Ruth also won with Mayhem.

2.6. Two Thyme's greatest success came when he won the Luhmühlen Four Star in 2007. This resulted in the pair being listed as reserve for the Beijing Olympics but, sadly the horse was injured and unable to compete.

2.7. Ruth moved to Foston Stud, near Uttoxeter in 2012, but with nineteen boxes it is very demanding in terms of time and management.

2.8. Following a period of ill health, Ruth has made the decision to reduce her workload and the high outgoings and the pressure of keeping a large yard working.

2.9. Ruth has six National Dressage Titles to her name with a variety of different horses. In December 2013 she finished second at her first ever Grand Prix competition riding her own, home produced, Shadowfax. To succeed at the very highest level in both Eventing and Dressage is almost unheard of.

2.10. Ruth has benefited from being a part of the Lottery Funded World Class Programme. She has a fantastic back up team of vets, farriers, physios, sponsors, grooms and trainers and has combined hard work with the ultimate dedicated care and training for all the horses in her yard.

2.11. With her Eventing career on a smaller scale, and her immense drive, dedication and ambition very much still in place, she is now aiming at competing internationally at the highest level in dressage.

2.12. Ruth is a British Eventing Accredited Trainer and is much in demand by both dressage riders and eventers.





Ruth Edge competing with Two Thyme

3. What is Dressage?

3.1. The word dressage is a French term most commonly translated to mean training. It is a highly skilled form of riding a series of predetermined movements performed in exhibition and competition, as well as an art sometimes pursued solely for the sake of its mastery. The discipline has a rich history with its roots going back to the writings of Xenophon.

3.2. British Dressage has a membership of over 55,000, and is the governing body of affiliated dressage competitions in Britain; it also regulates para-dressage competitions. Judges are trained to ensure consistent standards. The body also organises training.

3.3. The fundamental purpose is to develop, through standardised progressive training methods, a horse's natural athletic ability and willingness to perform.

3.4. With her Olympic success Charlotte DuJardin has raised the profile of dressage in this country.

3.5. Competitions are held at all levels from "Prelim" at a very amateur level, to the Grand Prix test performed at the Olympic Games.



Ruth Edge competing

4. New House Farm, Freehay

4.1. New House Farm was a poultry farm, located off School Lane at Freehay. The property includes a recently rebuilt three bedroomed house and an outbuilding. There are 6.2 acres of grazing land located behind the house, and to the east of the property. At one time this holding was linked to the farm behind but this is no longer the case.

4.2. The first time the house and outbuildings shows on the County Series maps is in 1970. The 2008 application makes reference to the original house being about 50 years old.

4.3. The house was rebuilt in 2008. The 2003 and 2006 Google Earth photographs show many more buildings on the site including the garage that is to become the groom's accommodation. The land to the east shows as an arable field in 2006. Google Earth maps are included at Appendix I.

4.4. There is a small block of newly planted woodland to the rear of the site. The field boundaries are overgrown hedgerows with some mature trees, mostly sycamore.

4.5. No footpaths cross the land, and there is no ancient woodland or areas identified as areas of environmental interest.







Existing house and outbuilding

5. Planning History

5.1. The planning history is limited. Various unsuccessful attempts have been made over the years to build additional houses on the site.

5.2. Planning permission was granted for the replacement house by reference 08/00115, following a withdrawn application in 2007.

5.3. The informative attached to the conditions for the 2008 planning application made reference to the point that the rebuild did not result in adverse amenity issues or impact adversely upon highway safety. Permitted development rights for the house have been withdrawn.

6. The Proposal

6.1. Access to the site will remain as presently configured with electric gates for security at the entrance. A new porous, 4 metre wide internal access track will connect the various elements of the development.

6.2. The proposal shows a u-shape stable block with six loose boxes, feed and rug store, tack room and wash bays. The walls are clad with horizontal timber ship-lap boarding on a brick plinth, the pitched roof provides an overhang to the internal courtyard and is covered with black Onduline sheets. The eaves are 2.25m high with a ridge height of approximately 3.5m.

6.3. The building is carefully sited to give sufficient circulation space round it. The site is very well screened by mature trees and hedging.

6.4. An area of porous hardstanding is shown to accommodate horse transporters and cars, formed of rolled planings on compacted hardcore base.

6.5. There is a five horse, horse walker with a profiled steel roof shown to be located close to, and overlooked by the horse building. This is essential to ensure the safety of the horses using the walker.

6.6. A 16m open lunge pen is also located discreetly near the stable block.

6.7. Muck will be stored on a trailer that will be removed as necessary.

6.8. The sand school is located in the field to the east of the proposed yard because it was felt too much development in the smaller field would reduce circulation space. The sand school is 20m x 60 metres. It will be unfenced. The surface will be Waxtrack from Equestrian Surfaces.



Existing entrance



The site is very well screened by mature trees and hedging

6.9. The groom's accommodation that provides one bedroom will be in the brick building with profiled steel roof in the curtilage of the house. Two garages will be retained for the house. The foul drainage will connect to a sewage treatment plant serving the new equestrian building that will utilise a ditch close by to take the water.

6.10. Any new areas of hardstanding will be rolled planings on Type 1 MOT base which is relatively permeable. Rainwater from roofs to be dealt with by rainwater Harvesting for re-use for drinking troughs and washing with any excess diverted to a soakaway.

6.11. The grazing will be subdivided in to small paddocks using electrified green mesh tape to ensure minimal visual impact. The paddocks will be regularly cleared of droppings to avoid damage to the grazing.



Example Horse Walker



Existing building to be converted to Groom Accommodation, garages will be retained for use by the house



View toward proposed sand school location

7. The Proposed Business

7.1. The intention will be to accommodate six talented horses on site. Two will belong to the applicant, with three kept as full liveries for Ruth to compete, and a horse belonging to the groom.

7.2. Ruth Edge will continue to undertake some bespoke teaching of people on their own horses. The site will not be used as a riding school.

7.3. The business will employ one full time groom, with some part time help.

8. Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)

8.1. Paragraph 83 of the NPPF *"Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy"* supports the sustainable growth of all types of business in rural areas including provision of well designed new buildings.

8.2. The policy supports diversification of land based rural businesses; New House farm is too small to be a viable farm, but will adapt to provides a viable equestrian business.

8.3. Paragraph 84 recognises that some rural businesses will be located in less sustainable locations. More isolated development must be sensitive to its surroundings, and does not have an unacceptable impact on the road network. In this case the new building is discretely located and well screened. Traffic generation will be limited and spread out through the day. The fact the proprietor and groom live on site further reduces the need to travel.

Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (2010)

8.4. The catch all policies highlight the importance of ensuring proposals do not harm the rural environment in terms of visual impact or biodiversity.

8.5. Core Strategy policy R1 supports rural diversification and makes it clear that there are overriding priorities including visual impact.

8.6. In the case of this application the new building is well screened and not obvious from any public viewpoint.

8.7. The emerging local plan that has undergone its Examination in Public at policies NE1 and NE2 emphasises the importance of biodiversity and trees. Both have been independently assessed and the information used to inform the design work. Care has been taken not to compromise tree roots, and trees and hedges are retained with additional planting.

Landscape Character Assessment

8.8. Freehay is within Area 64, Potteries and Churnet Valley.

8.9. Various distinctive features are listed including hedges, isolated buildings, hedges, quarrying, small scale fields.

8.10. Concerns include horseyculture, and removal of hedges and trees. In the case of this site, the proposed yard will be managed by an experienced yard owner who recognises the importance of the appearance of the holding to the success of her business. The pasture will be carefully managed.

8.11. The LCA also makes the point the landscape is not particularly sensitive to change.

9. Conclusion

9.1. This development is sensitively designed and located using a scale, form and materials common to the agricultural landscape within which it sits and contributes to the local and rural economy.

9.2. The proposal satisfies both national and local planning policy and ensures the progression of a successful equestrian business.

9.3. The local planning authority is respectfully asked to approve this development.

Appendix I - Google Earth maps

