

JPPC ref: NW/7987
Planning Portal Ref:

Planning Services
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
OX15 4AA

29th September 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

Without Prejudice

Application for planning permission for the formation of three new jumps

at Swalcliffe Park Equestrian Ltd, Grange Lane, Swalcliffe

Please find enclosed an application seeking planning permission for the engineering works associated with the installation of three new equestrian jumps to be used in connection as part of the equestrian operations permitted by planning permission 14/01762/F.

The application is made without prejudice to the assertion that the proposed jumps and other works are either not development or *de minimis* engineering operations in the context of the site as a whole..

Background and Proposals

Swalcliffe Park Equestrian is a family run equestrian centre, which provides year round training facilities and hosts various competitions from Pony Club & Riding Club to affiliated British Eventing Horse Trials. It has been operating from the site for a number of years and since 2015 under the provisions of planning permission 14/01762/F.

The course has not been improved or altered since that time and during that period a number of competitor sites have established in the local area. In order to remain fresh and competitive as a business the applicants are applying to provide 3 new jumps to improve their facilities for customers.

The John Phillips Planning Consultancy

Partners:

Adrian Gould MRTPI Ltd

Neil Warner MRTPI Ltd

Henry Venners Ltd



Bagley Croft
Hinksey Hill
Oxford OX1 5BD
T: 01865 326823
E: planning@jppc.co.uk
W: www.jppc.co.uk

Proposed works

The proposals seek consent for the formation of 3 new permanent jumps. These would be located as identified on the accompanying site location plan in the far western corner of the site, in the centre close to the jumps store and centrally towards the southern boundary. The approximate locations are identified on the aerial photograph below.



Jump 1 would consist of two circular earth mounds 24 metres across, with a 12 metre diameter table in the centre. They would be 1 metre above existing ground level. They would be 12 metres apart, with that intervening section lowered by 0.5 metres. To one side of each mound would be a set of two steps down with the remainder sloped. The steps would be formed by timber sleepers in a similar fashion to the below image.





Jump 2 is a section of ditches – three in total, 0.5m deep and 5 metres wide x between 0.5metres and 1 metre wide. A similar ditch feature is shown in the below image.



Jump 3 is a series of three circular earth mounds 24 metres across, with a 12 metre diameter table in the centre. They would be 1 metre above existing ground level. They would be between 6 and 12 metres apart. To one side of one mound would be a set of two steps down with the remainder sloped, the second would have one step for part of the slope and the third just sloped. Two 8 metre x 1 metre ditches would sit between them. The steps would be formed by timber sleepers as would; the sides of the ditches.

Planning Policy and other guidance

Policy AG5 of the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 is a saved policy dealing with equestrian developments:

AG5 Proposals for horse related development will normally be permitted provided:

- i. The proposal would not have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the countryside;
- ii. The proposal would not be detrimental to the amenity of neighbouring properties;
- iii. The proposal complies with the other policies in the plan.

Paragraph 83 of the NPPF confirms that planning policies and decisions should enable, amongst other things, the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses and sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside . Paragraph B.36 of the Local Plan confirms that acceptable employment growth in rural areas will include sustainable growth in recreation based tourism.

The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Assessment (OWLS) identifies the site as being within a rolling village pastures landscape, characterised by a distinctive landform of small rounded hills and narrow valleys. The key characteristics include:

- A strongly undulating landform of rounded hills and small valleys.
- Small to medium-sized fields with mixed land uses, but predominantly pasture.
- Densely scattered hedgerow trees.
- Well-defined nucleated villages with little dispersal into the wider countryside.

In terms of land use and vegetation the assessment identifies on the steeper slopes that semi-improved and rough grassland interspersed by scrubby vegetation and gorse dominate. It further comments that pony grazing is also evident throughout the area and that a characteristic feature is the medieval ridge and furrow pattern on the slopes, which is often clearly visible from a distance.

For the Sibford Gower character area (CW/39) it notes that the landscape character is medium-sized fields with mainly semi-improved grassland and some arable cropping. The pasture is mainly used for pony grazing and dairy stock. On steeper slopes, the grassland is interspersed with scattered gorse. Fields are enclosed by a weak pattern of tall hawthorn hedges, many of which have been replaced by fences or removed altogether, particularly where arable farming is dominant. Mature hedgerow trees, consisting mainly of ash, sycamore and some oak, are prominent throughout the area. They are sparser within field hedges and where arable farming dominates. There are a few mixed plantations with species such as ash, oak and Scots Pine.

The identified landscape strategy for the area includes:

- Strengthen the field pattern by planting up existing gappy hedges and replacing fences using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash.
- Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.

- Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture, particularly remnants of ridge and furrow pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly along the valley sides and bottoms.
- Contain the size of settlements and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that are appropriate to this landscape type.
- Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as oak, ash and field maple.
- Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash, and where appropriate pollarding willows.

Discussion

Swalcliffe Park Equestrian is an existing rural business, which both National and Local Planning policy seek to support in terms of growth. It provides recreational based tourism which is important to the economy of the District and represents the continuing diversification of an existing land based business.

Considering the requirements of the policy AG5, there are no nearby neighbours whose amenity would be affected as a result of the proposed development and no other policies are considered of relevance to the proposal. The existing use of the site is controlled by planning permission 14/01762/F and the proposals would not change the provisions of that consent in respect of the frequency or locations where equestrian activity might take place.

In fact, the provision of additional permanent features would reduce the amount of time required to set up events and in that respect any noise or disturbance to neighbours could reasonably be concluded to reduce as a result of the application. Therefore, we submit, the main issue for consideration would be the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the countryside and that ought to be balanced against the policies in both the NPPF and Local Plan that support the growth of rural enterprise.

The proposed three new groups of jumps would be formed in the landscape and would be a maximum of 1 metre tall, with some being subterranean. They would be viewed in the context of the existing equestrian activities that occur at the site and part of the existing rolling landscape of the area. They would be well screened from most public vantage points by the hedgerows surrounding the site and where visible would not appear as intrusive or alien to the countryside.

Looking to the OWLS comments, the continued use of the site for agriculture and equestrian uses combined encourages the retention of the pasture, which the character study seeks to preserve. OWLS identifies equine activities as a common feature in the area and in this context the proposed low level features would not appear alien or out of place. The dominance of ridge and furrow further suggests that low level landforms are not out of place within the local landscape.

It is concluded that the development would be in accordance with the development plan and would not cause any harm to the character of the area. Any low level visual impact that might be perceived would be outweighed by the economic benefits of supporting an existing rural business and the contribution the recreational based tourism it provides makes to the local economy.

We trust that officers will support these proposals. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully



**Neil Warner BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI
Principal**

Director of Neil Warner MRTPI Ltd, a Partner of JPPC

Email: neil.warner@jppc.co.uk
Direct dial: 01865 322356