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APPLICATION ON BEHALF OF MR AND MRS McLEOD

FORMATION OF 40 X 20 METRE HORSE EXERCISE AREA ENCLOSED BY 3-RAIL TRADITIONAL TIMBER FENCE (INCLUDING CHANGE OF USE FROM 'PADDOCK')

Design and Access Statement / Planning Statement

Applicant and Site Analysis

The applicants are the owners of Willow Manor which is located off local road Mole Drove in the locality of Gedney Hill. The family reside at the property.

The family keep and ride horses and these also reside at the site. Riding activity covers several disciplines including participating in competitive dressage and showjumping.

Relevant planning approvals historically include the following:
H07-0850-11 approved December 2011 for replacement stable yard and the change of use of grassland to 'paddock'.

The property is located c.9 miles south-east of Spalding, c.8 miles west of Wisbech and c.9 miles south of Holbeach. It is east of the Gedney Hill village centre in an area of scattered detached properties of rural aspect which are located within the rectangular arrangements of drove lanes and drainage ditching that typifies the area. Many properties have equestrian facilities and exercise areas as requested in this application exist all around the proposed site.

The land parcel is itself of rectangular shape and amounts to c. 8 acres in total. Within this, the residence and residential outbuildings, together with the approved equestrian buildings, are centrally positioned. The grazing paddocks are defined in four regular rectangles by traditional post and rail timber fencing. The equestrian usage is well established both in line with the planning applications mentioned above and also historically, extending to former owners for at least 15 years.

The site of the proposed exercise area is positioned in the corner of one of the paddocks, to the immediate north/north-east of the existing stable yard, extending to the north/north-east boundary of the property. In this position it is readily and safely reached from the stable yard.

Trees along the boundary to which it will attach will screen it from the next property in this direction which is some 63 metres distant at the nearest point with trees and its own outbuildings lying between also. There are trees and hedging to the remaining north-west (including a triangle of more recent planting at the northmost corner) and south-west boundaries of the paddock in which the site lies, as well as all along the boundary adjoining the highway.

The ground is flat and although lying within the documented flood zone the applicants are not aware of any flooding occurring. It should be noted too that two of the outer boundaries are edged with ditches and crucially, the proposed structure is entirely porous.

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ABOVE - Aerial View of Proposed Site – NOT TO SCALE, for indicative illustration of site position only
Note existing similar horse exercise areas seen to south east, north west and north/north east of the site.

BELOW LEFT – View of Site as is, BELOW RIGHT Showing approximation of proposed exercise area





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Impact Assessment

There are no trees nor hedges in any way affected by the proposal.
There are no neighbouring properties in any way affected.
No noise nor smells will be created.
There is no visual impact – the proposal will resemble a fenced paddock area, very similar to the existing and is unseen and very well screened from any public perspective.
Lighting is not proposed.
There are no archaeological implications.
There are no ecological implications.
The site does not lie within any prohibitive planning designations.
There is no implication for traffic volumes except in a positive sense in that horses will no longer have to be taken from the premises to use such essential exercise facility elsewhere.
There is a very positive impact on the ground conditions within the land parcel itself (see below)
There is a very positive impact on the use of horse permitted public routes and highways (see below)

Site Access

The proposed exercise area is to service the existing, established equestrian use at the site. Access is thus entirely internal to the property on horse or foot from the existing stabling and the private residence.

Design Principle - Explanation of Need

Location: The position and layout for the proposed facility has been selected as the most suitable, this in terms of technical completion, functionality and access from the existing stabling. Moreover, it is a discreet position intended to blend in with the surroundings entirely and offer no harm to the landscape nor intrusion to any other parties. The nearest neighbouring residence is c.63 metres and is well separated by existing trees and its own residential buildings.

Sizing - The size has been proposed in order to furnish an area suitable for exercise and training at the main horse gaits of walk, trot and canter. At 0.08 hectares (800 square metres) the size is one of the two official 'dressage' formations, which are 40 x 20 metres and 60 x 20 metres

The applicants keep equines to participate in a broad range of equestrian activities both recreational/leisure and sporting and they compete in dressage and show jumping.

Structure - As horse riding is a year round sport and leisure activity it is essential that the exercise area will be usable largely year round. Historically, horse riding activity was carried out extensively on grass. Indeed grass is an excellent riding surface, but only when it can be used selectively. That is: in suitable weather conditions. Where constant use is essential, as is the case here, then grass is not a suitable medium. Its wear capability and recovery rate in heavy use is naturally poor and, above all, its condition as a result of unsuitable weather patterns cannot be adequately controlled.

Enforced use of grassland in unsuitable conditions, or over-use, even if conditions remain suitable for the wellbeing of the horse, is detrimental to the land itself, causing significant damage and poaching. Not only is this aesthetically to be avoided in landscape terms, it potentially leads to many health problems in the horse: in poor weather conditions, a grass area will be too wet, muddy and slippery. Use at such times will soon plough up the ground, adding unevenness. This can cause trips, slips and wrenches, injuring muscles and tendons and also resulting in falls, which can easily result in a permanently debilitating injury.

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In what are typically deemed 'good weather conditions' i.e. extended periods without rainfall, such as the country as a whole is tending to experience more and more regularly, grassland will fast become too hard for horse riding, potentially causing injury through percussion.

In frosty conditions, use of any exercise area without a suitable frost resistant surface will very fast become impossible.

Another means of regular horse exercise used historically is to 'hack out' on public routes and bridleways and other horse permitted routes and a small number of such routes do exist in the locality. However, this means of horse exercise is also impacted by weather in much the same way as grass. It is also an environment that cannot be in any way controlled by the user and the sights and sounds encountered can never be accurately predicted. Occurrences such as a herd of newly turned-out stock galloping in adjacent fields, brightly dressed runners, off road bikers, loose dogs, mowers and hedge cutters and so on can render this means of exercise dangerous for some highly bred, or simply younger and less experienced horses and/or riders.

The off-road horse permissible paths and tracks of the vicinity cannot be accessed without use of the public highway, where encountering what is the perfectly normal traffic of such routes: sometimes overly fast moving cars, motorbikes, cyclists, tractors with/without often extremely large and rattling equipment on tow, busses, lorries and so on, can prove very dangerous for the horse and rider.

'Hacking out', be it on- or off-road, is furthermore not feasible when it is foggy, frosty or snowy, nor indeed in other conditions of poor visibility (seeing and being seen by others) or of a type likely to disturb and worry the horse, such as torrential rain or severe wind.

Hacking out is also a 'straight line' activity – particularly so in this location - and does not permit the circular training and bending exercises which are essential for suppleness, muscle tone and, indeed, the necessary highly tuned obedience to the rider's instructions. It also does not facilitate jump training, nor rehearsal of dealing with the types of obstacles as may be presented in various commonly practiced equestrian sporting activities.

The aim of the proposal, therefore, is to provide a horse exercise area within the location where the family's equines are kept which will permit the unrestricted and optimally safer exercise and training on a regular and largely year-round basis. This will support their physical wellbeing in facilitating suitable fittening exercise and also permits the training routines and precise rehearsals that will ensure that they can reach their ultimate potential as leisure and sports competition animals, and as riders.

The proposed facility will reduce the use of public routes and use of the remaining pasture land at the premises, in both instances significantly reducing their wear and tear and in the case of the public routes, leaving these free for the use of other legitimate users.

It will also reduce traffic from the property as the applicants will no longer have to travel horses out to undertake this necessary exercise and training elsewhere.

Design Solution

The exercise facility is to be built to the highest standards by a very experienced operation and the proposed design has been well proven in use over 43 years (please refer to cross section drawing ref. 16348-4). This structure will provide a safer, more consistent surface which, under the applicants' full control and care, can be managed to allow the necessary year-round exercise and training of the equines kept at the site, in most weather situations.

The riding surface is to be built onto a free draining base of clean, local stone. Surface water filters through this structure and thence naturally into the ground over the whole area, exactly as occurs in the existing grass environment.

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There will be no concentrated flow of water created and the structure is completely porous. There is zero negative flood implication.

The site is relatively level therefore only minimal grading is required with no import of fill necessary, nor removal of excavated materials from site.

The exercise area is to be bounded around its perimeter in sawn treated timber 3-rail post and rail fencing incorporating a '5-bar' timber farm gate. (see section and elevations included drawings 16348-4 and 16348-5). As such, it visually resembles a small fenced paddock. By thus enclosing the exercise activities, a further improvement in rider/handler safety is provided.

The riding surface material is to comprise of a widely used, suitably performing specialist equestrian sand. This delivers the necessary performance capability, i.e. giving good, stress absorbent, slip resistant and horse-supportive going. To extend weather tolerance and stress absorption capabilities of the sand, a fibre additive is blended through the sand. The colour is a natural buff-beige tone.



A horse exercise area similar to the one proposed;
Note training mirrors, as seen here, are <u>not</u> included in this application and are not intended.

Note: there is no accumulation of dung in use of a horse exercise area as proposed. The level of droppings during controlled exercise can be expected to be small – indeed significantly less than a horse free grazing in a grass paddock.. Any as may be deposited on the exercise area will be collected for the preservation of the performance capabilities of the riding surface and handled as part of the existing stable management routine at the site.

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Relevant Planning Policies

The relevant policies in consideration of this application are the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), The National Policy Guidance (NPPG), and the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan.

The proposal accords fully with all directives.

The standard of design is of the highest available for this type of facility, to be constructed by an operation with 43 years standing. The visual format is of a simple rectangular, traditionally timber fenced paddock area.

A very modest degree of grading of the site is required with a maximum cut/fill of c.1 metre. This ground will be re-seeded back to grass to blend in with the adjacent pasture land.

The intended use is entirely private. There is no request for lighting.

The provision of a suitable and well structured horse exercise area in property where horses are kept has the added benefit of reducing the stress on the land itself and on horse permitted routes in the vicinity.

The proposal supports the existing keeping of equines at the site and does not in any way intensify use. Traffic is reduced as horses no longer need to be transported out of the site for training and exercise elsewhere.

In terms of residential amenity, there is no harm occasioned to the occupants of any dwelling.

In Conclusion:
There are several positive effects in the provision of the proposed horse exercise facility. There are no negative effects with regard to the landscape of the area, not visually nor with regard to its intrinsic character. The usage proposed is indeed entirely in harmony with the locality, where horse keeping and riding is, and always has been, a very common sport and leisure activity which lends significant support to the wellbeing of the rural economy.

We hope that the application will therefore be considered favourably.

End of Design and Access Statement / Planning Statement

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