Site Address: Middledene House, Surfleet Road, Pinchbeck, Spalding, PE11 4AG
Proposal: Proposed Detached Building to be used as a Reformer Pilates & Wellness Studio
Applicant: Mr & Mrs Wilson

Introduction & Supporting Statement

This supporting statement accompanies the planning application for a proposed Reformer Pilates & Wellness Studio at Middledene House. I acknowledge that the initial submission lacked sufficient detail to fully demonstrate the planning merits of the proposal. This revised statement provides a more comprehensive justification, addressing previous concerns and aligning the proposal with national and local planning policy objectives.

I currently operate a well-established equestrian business at Middledene House, which includes the management of a busy livery yard and the provision of riding lessons to a loyal and growing client base. Over the years, I have built a strong reputation within the local equestrian community, offering high-quality care, training, and support to riders of all levels.

The inspiration for this proposed development stems from my own personal journey. Having experienced severe back problems, I discovered Reformer Pilates as a transformative rehabilitation tool. It not only alleviated my pain but significantly improved my core strength, posture, and overall riding performance. This experience highlighted the profound benefits Pilates can offer to equestrians, whose physical demands often lead to chronic musculoskeletal issues.

The proposed studio is therefore not just a business expansion—it is a natural and meaningful extension of the existing equestrian offering. It aims to create a haven for riders and equestrian professionals to access tailored wellness support in a familiar and supportive environment. By integrating Reformer Pilates and complementary wellness services into the existing site, the development will enhance the health and wellbeing of the local equestrian community while remaining sensitive to the rural character and operational rhythm of the yard.

2. Planning Policy Context

The proposal has been considered against Policies 1, 24, and 32 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019), particularly in relation to the sequential test for main town centre uses and development outside settlement boundaries.

This supporting evidence demonstrates that:

1. The proposal supports the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) objectives, including promoting rural enterprise, preventative healthcare, and sustainable small businesses.
2. A sequential approach has been undertaken, and no suitable or viable town centre or edge-of-centre sites exist for this specific use.

3. The proposed location offers clear community, wellbeing, and operational benefits that justify its siting.

3. Sequential Test & Location Justification

Although the proposed use is classified as a "main town centre use" under Class E, the nature of a Reformer Pilates & Wellness Studio differs significantly from general leisure or gym facilities. Its operational requirements make typical town centre premises unsuitable, and the rural nature of the clientele base further supports the need for an out-of-centre location.

Context:

- Use: Reformer Pilates and wellness therapy (Class E)
- Size: Approx. 115 sqm proposed floorspace
- Clientele: Rural catchment – primarily Pinchbeck, Surfleet, Gosberton, Wyberton
- Operational Need: Quiet, secluded environment essential for therapeutic practice, particularly for rehabilitation, posture correction, and injury prevention in horse riders

Key Characteristics of the Use:

- Requires tranquillity and privacy, not achievable in busy commercial environments
- Needs modest-scale specialist floorspace, generally unavailable in standard commercial units
- Demands safe, accessible parking for small class groups
- Strong synergy with equestrian activity, supporting rider strength, balance, and recovery

Sequential Test Scope:

- Town Centres: Spalding, Holbeach
- Edge-of-Centre: Spalding fringe (e.g. Wardentree Lane), Pinchbeck Business Park
- Out-of-Centre: Rural sites, including the application site

Findings:

1. Spalding Town Centre:
    - No suitable vacant units with required height, privacy, or acoustic control
    - High street shops unsuitable for specialist equipment and therapeutic use

- Rents incompatible with a low-footfall, appointment-based business model
- Conclusion: Not viable

2. Edge-of-Centre Locations:
    - No suitable small-scale commercial sites available
    - Existing allocations geared toward B-class or logistics use
    - Conclusion: Not suitable or available
3. Application Site (Out-of-Centre):
    - Previously developed land, part of an active rural business
    - Compatible with existing land use and setting
    - Provides essential environmental qualities (privacy, peace, security)
    - Existing private access with minimal impact on the road network
    - Strong synergy with equestrian use and land ownership
    - Clients already travel to the site to ride and attend sessions, reducing additional traffic
    - Evening operating hours (6:00pm–9:00pm) avoid peak traffic periods, 45 minute classes with 15 minutes between each class to avoid congestion.
    - On-site private car park ensures safe and convenient access for clients
    - Located near Birchgrove Garden Centre, which includes Bettertack, a well-known equestrian retailer, reinforcing the area's equestrian character and providing convenient access to equipment and supplies for the studio's core clientele
    - Accessible via local cycle paths and walkways, supporting active travel options
    - A bus stop near Birchgrove Garden Centre offers public transport access for clients without cars

Overall Sequential Test Conclusion:

There are no suitable, available, or viable alternatives within more sustainable locations that meet the operational requirements of this rural wellness enterprise. The proposed development:

- Sits on previously developed land and is well-integrated with existing land use
- Enables rural diversification and supports a genuine rural need
- Is low-impact in design and function, with timber-based cottage-style materials to blend with the landscape

- Benefits from strong transport links, including walking, cycling, and public transport options
- Aligns with NPPF paragraphs 88, 89, and 93, supporting sustainable rural development and health infrastructure

4. Community Benefit & Need

The studio will address a growing local demand for specialist Pilates equipment classes, which are currently unavailable in the Pinchbeck/Spalding area.

Benefits include:

- Supporting physical and mental health, in line with NHS and government priorities.
- Providing a local, accessible service, reducing travel demand.
- Creating a safe, small-scale wellness environment for adults and those recovering from injury.
- Offering targeted benefits for horse riders, including improved posture, core strength, injury prevention, and rehabilitation. Pilates is particularly effective in addressing common issues such as leaning to one side in the saddle, muscular imbalances, and lower back strain.

5. Economic & Practical Viability

This proposal represents a small-scale rural enterprise that will:

- Contribute to local economic diversity, in line with NPPF paragraph 84.
- Operate from the applicant's property, enabling efficient management alongside an existing equestrian business.
- Remain financially viable, unlike town-centre premises which would be unsustainable.

6. Design & Environmental Considerations

The building is modest in scale and designed to complement its surroundings. Supporting assessments (biodiversity, flood risk) confirm there are no environmental constraints.

There will be no adverse impact on neighbouring amenity, landscape character, or highway safety. The evening operating hours (6:00pm–9:00pm) are outside of peak traffic periods, and the existing client base already travels to the site regularly during these times for their horses, meaning no significant increase in traffic is anticipated.

7. Conclusion

This supporting statement demonstrates that:

- No sequentially preferable sites are suitable or viable.
- The proposal delivers significant health, wellbeing, and community benefits.
- It supports sustainable rural enterprise and economic diversity.
- The design is modest, environmentally appropriate, and sympathetic to the rural setting.
- The proposed operating hours and existing client base ensure minimal traffic impact.
- The studio complements the existing equestrian business and meets the specific needs of horse riders, enhancing their physical wellbeing and riding performance.
- The site benefits from private access and has demonstrated minimal impact on the road network over several years of equestrian use.
- The building will be constructed using timber-based materials in a cottage style, ensuring a low-impact, rural-appropriate finish.

To further support the planning application and provide reassurance regarding future development, I am willing to offer the removal of permitted development rights within the red line boundary of the proposed building. This would ensure that any future changes would be subject to full planning control, maintaining the integrity and scale of the development as proposed.

The proposal aligns with the objectives of the NPPF and local planning policy, and I respectfully request that the application be considered favourably.