



25 September 2014

Philippa Kelly  
Planning – Major Projects  
Forest Heath District Council  
College Heath Road  
Mildenhall  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP28 7EY

Our Ref: 47069659  
Your Ref:

Dear Philippa,

**Re. Planning Application Ref. DC/14/0585/OUT  
Meddler Stud, Bury Road, Kentford**

I refer to the officer's Committee Report relating to the above outline planning application, which has been published in advance of the upcoming Development Control Committee meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> October. The Committee Report recommends refusal of the application on the basis that the application provides insufficient justification for the loss of land currently used in connection with a Racehorse Training Establishment (RTE). This letter therefore provides additional rationale for the application proposals and demonstrates how the loss of some equine land at the site is justified in these particular circumstances.

The starting point for the current application proposals was the optimisation of a 20-box RTE, based on the previous Inspector's conclusions that *"the presented evidence points to the probability that a 20-box RTE would have a reasonable prospect of success on the site"*.

It must be particularly noted that the Inspector was conspicuously and unusually specific about the size of the RTE which could work, rather than making a more generalised comment. He reached this conclusion having heard detailed evidence from (and robust cross-examination of) two equine expert witnesses over a number of days. This wealth of detailed evidence related to the suitability and viability of a wide range of potential equine operations of varying sizes, and some of the key factors which informed his decision and, consequently, the current application proposals are detailed within this submission.

URS Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited  
Building 7, Michael Young Centre,  
Purbeck Road, Cambridge,  
CB2 8QL, United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 (0)1223 275 730  
Fax: +44 (0)1223 275 731  
[www.ursglobal.com](http://www.ursglobal.com)

URS Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited  
Place of Registration: England & Wales  
Registered Number: 880328  
Registered Office: Scott House, Alençon Link, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 7PP, United Kingdom

In particular, this submission seeks to concisely consider the following issues:

1. Why is a 20-box RTE appropriate for this site?
2. What is the justification for the layout proposed and the loss of some equine land?
3. Why was this information not submitted sooner?
4. What are the planning policy implications?

### 1. Why is a 20-box RTE appropriate for this site?

The Inspector acknowledged that the site does not have access to nearby gallops and that horses would need to be boxed-in to the central gallops in Newmarket on a regular basis. Boxing has significant, practical, operational and cost implications and it was recognised that a larger RTE of 30-40 boxes, for example, would not be workable in these terms. However, the Inspector did conclude that that *“just because a future trainer might depend upon the central gallops and facilities in Newmarket, the presented evidence does not necessarily show that a small-scale RTE would be unviable in such circumstances”*.

The public inquiry heard detailed evidence relating to financial viability of potential RTE operations on the site. The Inspector concluded specifically that a 20-box RTE could be commercially viable, albeit marginally, based on the refurbishment of some of the existing buildings. Other theoretical alternatives were not considered to be viable.

Although not explicitly mentioned in the Inspector’s decision, there was considerable evidence heard about the market for RTEs in and around Newmarket. Due to its location and characteristics, it was considered that a 20-box RTE at this site would have particular appeal as a starter yard for a trainer setting up a new business. The trainer could then later upgrade to a larger yard within Newmarket, of which there are many, if a successful operation could be established. Conversely, a larger RTE at the application site would be in direct competition with, and be less attractive than, the many alternatives within Newmarket.

Although somewhat anecdotal, this view is also supported by current RTE market conditions. Table 1 below lists all those RTEs in and around Newmarket currently available for sale of which I am aware. It indicates that there are no small-scale (20-box) RTEs currently available, but that the market for larger RTEs (30-60 boxes) is saturated. These available RTEs are all located far closer to the racing hub of Newmarket. Consequently, a RTE of this scale at the application site in Kentford would struggle to compete.

Address	Boxes
Sackville House Stables, Sackville Street, Newmarket	29
Eve Lodge Stables, Hamilton Road, Newmarket	95
Revida Place, Hamilton Road, Newmarket	50
Queen Alexandra Stables, Chapel Street, Exning	34
Grange House Stables, Hamilton Road, Newmarket	53

Table 1: RTEs for sale in and around Newmarket, September 2014

In summary, the Inspector had no reason to be so specific about the size of a potentially successful RTE, unless the extensive presented evidence from both equine expert witnesses had led him to this conclusion. The current application proposals have therefore been very deliberately predicated on the basis of a 20-box RTE as this would have the greatest prospect of succeeding, and therefore, would be most likely to be of benefit to the horse racing industry.

## **2. What is the justification for the layout proposed and the loss of some equine land?**

Working on the principle that a 20 box RTE would provide the greatest benefit to the horse racing industry, the illustrative masterplan was formulated so as to optimise such a facility. Having regard to advice from an equine expert, it was considered that, to be a high quality and commercially attractive RTE in this location, it would require a range of facilities, including residential accommodation, an exercise track and a paddock. It was considered that an RTE based on the refurbishment of existing buildings would naturally be constrained by the locations of those buildings and that layout would be sub-optimised. Such an arrangement would not be as commercially attractive as an RTE laid out in an optimal configuration with brand new purpose-built buildings and facilities. The proposed layout therefore shows all of these facilities provided in a purpose-built optimal configuration. The Council's own equine expert acknowledges in his consultation response that the scheme has the potential to be a very good stable yard.

As noted above, it was concluded by the Inspector that a 20-box RTE based on refurbished buildings could be viable, albeit marginally. A brand new optimised facility will, of course, be more expensive to construct. Although the application proposals have not been submitted on an enabling development basis, it is logical that, in reality, the residential element of the application proposals will help to fund the new RTE and that such a facility would be otherwise less likely to come forward. Critically, a new optimised 20-box RTE, provides a far more attractive potential starter yard than a 'shoestring' refurbishment of the existing facilities, and is therefore likely to provide greater benefit to the horse racing industry.

RTEs naturally require less land than stud farms (the original use of the application site) and the amount of land proposed to be retained for equine purposes is proportionate to, and appropriate for a commercially attractive 20-box RTE, which would make an excellent starter yard in particular. A larger RTE, using more land would be counter-productive, in that it would be less attractive as a starter yard and would be in direct competition with larger 30-60 box yards, of which there are many currently available within Newmarket itself. Therefore, use of the residual land for equine purposes would be more likely to hinder than benefit the horse racing industry and, in these unique and exceptional circumstances relating to this particular site, alternative use of the land would in fact benefit the horse racing industry. It is noted that all parties at the public inquiry agreed the site is not appropriate for any alternative equine use.

## **3. Why was this information not submitted sooner?**

In the interests of providing a concise and straight-forward submission, the information submitted with the current outline planning application did not re-rehearse all of the arguments which led the Inspector to his conclusions about the size of an RTE. On mature reflection, this was perhaps remiss, insofar as it

requires someone without the benefit of an understanding of this complex context to take the Inspector's nuanced conclusions at face value, and to make a 'leap of faith' to get to the starting point for the formulation of the application proposals.

It is particularly appreciated that the Case Officer, Philippa Kelly, did not attend the public inquiry and it is now recognised that she would have benefitted from the above summary of the key factors which informed the Inspector's decision. Conversely, the Planning Policy Manager, Marie Smith, sat through the entire public inquiry and therefore naturally has a far greater appreciation of the context to the current application proposals. It is noted that she confirmed verbally to me earlier this month that she was satisfied with the current scheme in equine terms.

#### **4. What are the planning policy implications?**

It is considered that the above detailed information sets out the unique and exceptional circumstances relating to this particular site and supports the specific size of the proposed 20-box RTE. This information justifies the loss of the existing residual land which is currently associated with the horse racing industry. As such, the loss of the land to alternative non-equine use in these circumstances would not be a dis-benefit of the application proposals, and therefore, there is no conflict with extant Policy 12.4 and emerging Policy DM48.

In conclusion, the proposed development would not result in any adverse impacts, let alone any which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the many economic, environmental and social benefits which would be delivered by the scheme. The application would deliver a highly sustainable development which is in accordance with all planning policy at the national and local level and should be approved.

I would be grateful if you could have regard to the above submissions and reconsider the officer's recommendation accordingly.

Yours sincerely  
for **URS Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited**



**Thomas Smith** BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI  
Associate – Town Planning  
URS Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited

6-8 Greencoat Place, Victoria, London, SW1P 1PL, United Kingdom

Mobile: +44 (0)78 2730 1862  
thomas.d.smith@urs.com  
[www.ursglobal.com](http://www.ursglobal.com)