

Margaret Haes Riding Centre
Planning Statement
Green Belt Assessment

Why we need the horses:

The Margaret Haes Riding Centre has been in the same location in the foothills of Holcombe Hill for over 50 years. The location is perfect with a bridleway running past the Riding Centre for safe off road riding routes to the open countryside.

The Riding Centre is a charity which benefits the well-being and mental health of so many, welcoming anyone from the age of 4 years to ride including those without a disability and anyone over 13 years to volunteer. People with disabilities form more than half of the clients.

Margaret Haes Riding Centre is now a highly regarded British Horse Society Approved Centre and part of the British Horse Society's Changing Lives Through Horses Programme. Staff have been upskilled and overall standards raised to meet today's best practice, including managing horse welfare.

Horses touch the lives of people, helping them to heal and to embrace the new and the possible. The demand is huge and increasing. That's demand for horse riding and non-ridden horse experiences. As part of the BHS Changing Lives Through Horses programme, the Riding Centre also provides alternative education, developing life skills for those disengaged with school or college or with additional needs – all based around horses.

We bring the 'Spirit of the Horse' to some of the most vulnerable people, through our programmes of riding; equine care; and social connection. Our purpose is to empower children and adults with learning disabilities, physical and mental health disabilities, and emotional and social challenges; to lead active, healthy and fulfilling lives through equestrian activities.

To have a positive impact on the health and well-being for all our riders and volunteers.

Why we need the stables:

We have 12 horses at the moment and access to sufficient grazing land to support the horses. This enables the Riding Centre to deliver around 8500 rides per year, plus an expanding number of non-ridden educational and/or horse welfare and stable management sessions.

However, we only have 10 stables on site plus two partially erected on the hay loft . The proposal is to move the temporary stables to outside and behind the far stable block.

The temporary stables are in a dusty environment, no roof and not full size . Moving to the outside means the wooden stable kit can be erected to full size of two 12 feet

square stables which the bigger horses need and provide a dust free, better ventilated and better temperature controlled environment for the horses.

As riders weights have increased along with the population's general levels of obesity, we have increased the number of bigger horses which need the recommended 12 ft square stables .

Removing the temporary stables from the hay loft means we can properly store the horses hay, bedding and feed stuffs. The temporary stabling was an urgent measure to solve a problem but not to be a long term solution. Now the Charity has ownership of the Riding Centre this can be addressed.

Impact on Green Belt:

Our understanding is that whilst the Riding Centre is already a developed site as such, it remains as Green Belt.

We believe the stables development at the rear of the site would not be regarded as inappropriate in Green Belt.

The views of fields and woods that surround the Riding Centre is not harmed, in that the new location is barely visible either by the neighbouring properties or those enjoying the walk to Peel Tower.

We do not believe there is a conflict with Green Belt . The development is of a minor scale, on a poor area of land in a small paddock at the back of the site. It does not affect the character of the Holcombe village or the surroundings walks to Peel Tower and beyond.

The Riding Centre provides an opportunity for people be physically active in the open space of the Green Belt, that's both clients and volunteers, including many children and young people developing healthy lifestyles for adulthood. We understand recreation is seen as beneficial in the Green Belt and to be encouraged.

The location at the rear of the site is screened from the next neighbour with a bank of trees and it is a far enough distance away to not cause any disturbance to neighbouring properties.

Lighting of the stables will be sufficient for safe working of staff and volunteers and not intrusive. The stable lights only used when staff and volunteers working in non-daylight hours.

Overall, it is essential the Riding Centre has good quality stabling for the care of the 12 horses -horses that give so much back benefitting so many people .

26 June 2024