

Planning Application for an Equestrian Barn

at

**St Brides Major Riding and Trekking Centre,
Farmers Arms Lane,
St Brides Major, Vale of Glamorgan.
CF32 0SD**

Justification and
Design and Access Statement

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27 February 2015



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Reading Agricultural Consultants Ltd. (RAC) is instructed by Mr and Mrs C Davies to submit a planning application for an equestrian barn at St Brides Major Riding and Trekking Centre, Vale of Glamorgan.
- 1.2 The Applicants propose erecting a steel portal-framed building to provide all-weather cover for an existing teaching and training arena at the well-established equestrian enterprise.
- 1.3 The building is to be attached to the eastern elevation of an existing equestrian barn (shown on the DLP Architecture Site Plan, P392 002). The structure will be the same size as the existing building, and is totally enclosed with similar cladding.
- 1.4 The riding school was established 15 years ago as a diversification enterprise on part of a second generation 34.4ha (85 acre) family farm. The building would enable training and schooling lessons to be undertaken in all weather conditions; the activities presently take place on the application site, which is a fenced paddock.
- 1.5 The riding school offers a wide range of activities including riding lessons, pony days, horse riding parties, cross-country ride outs and Saturday club, as well as relevant courses and training. Mrs Davies is particularly interested in developing confidence and ability in children and adults who are disabled or have special educational needs. Links have been forged with Special Educational Needs Schools such as Heronsbridge and Ysgol Bryn Castell as well as Weston House, Bridgend College.
- 1.6 The proposed indoor school would be of particular benefit in this respect because it would allow the specialised services and expertise offered by the business to be undertaken in all weathers. In the absence of the proposed building many lessons have had to be abandoned or rescheduled due to adverse weather conditions.

Site and Surrounding Area

- 1.7 The application site is located in the north-west corner of a permanent pasture field extending to approximately 3.2 hectares (7.9 acres). This area includes the existing car park and circulation area, a 45m x 25m manège and a 30.5m x 18.0m building. The existing building accommodates seven stables, a tacking area, a secure tack room, office, stores and club room.



Figure 1. The application site. The proposed building adjoins the existing building

- 1.8 The site is approximately 750m east of St Brides Major, accessed via the Farmers Arms Lane off the B4265, south of the village of St Brides Major.

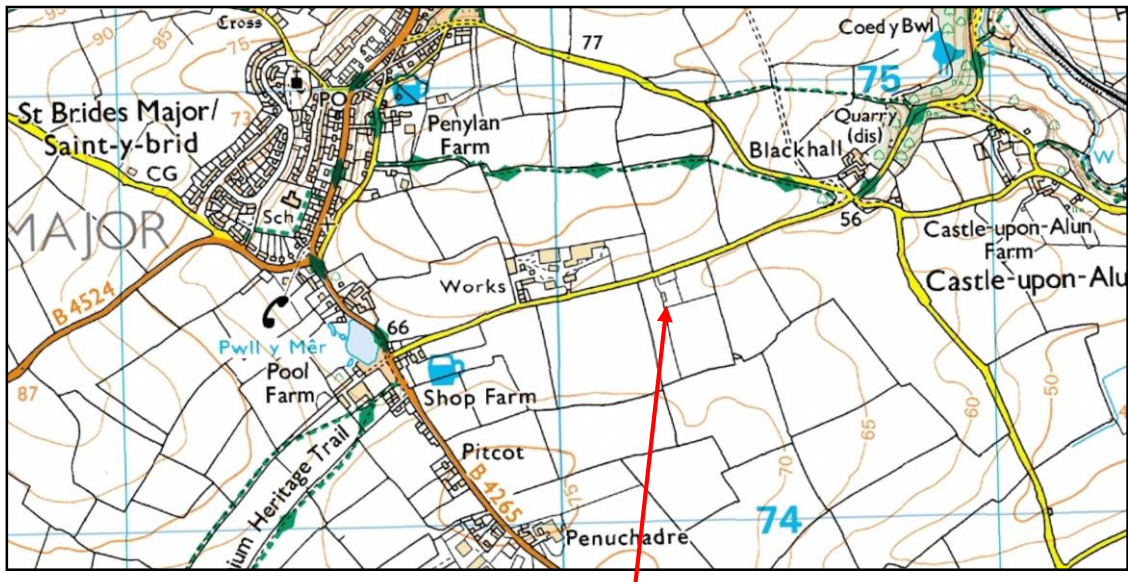


Figure 2. The application site.

- 1.9 The immediate surrounding area comprises rolling arable and pasture fields of varying sizes with assorted farmsteads. The site is enclosed by hedgerows atop earth banks.



Figure 3. The proposed building would be a similar external appearance to the existing building.

2 Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy

2.1 National planning policy is set out in Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 7 - July 2014), which is supported by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs). The principle of sustainability lies at the heart of the objectives contained within PPW.

2.2 The Welsh Government considers that an efficient and flexible agricultural industry is essential for rural prosperity. To this end PPW paragraph 7.3.3 states:

“...Local planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to development associated with farm diversification in rural areas, irrespective of whether farms are served by public transport. While initial consideration should be given to adapting existing farm buildings, the provision of a sensitively designed new building on a working farm within existing farm complexes may be appropriate where a conversion opportunity does not exist.”

2.3 TAN 6 *Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities* is broadly supportive of a strong rural and agricultural economy and states (paragraph 6.1.1):

“The Welsh Assembly Government’s objective is a sustainable and profitable future for farming families and businesses through the production and processing of farm products while safeguarding the environment, animal health and welfare,

adapting to climate change and mitigating its impacts, while contributing to the vitality and prosperity of our rural communities. The planning system can play an important part in supporting the future sustainability of agriculture.”

- 2.4 TAN 12: ‘*Design*’ advises that the Welsh Government is strongly committed to achieving the delivery of good design in the built and natural environments which is fit for purpose and delivers environmental sustainability, economic development and social inclusion at every scale throughout Wales.

Local Planning Policy

- 2.5 The relevant local development plan document is the Vale of Glamorgan Adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 1996-2011.

- 2.6 Of particular relevance is Policy ENV1 (*Development in the Countryside*) which states:

“Within the delineated countryside permission will only be granted for:

- i. Development which is essential for agriculture, horticulture, forestry or other development including mineral extraction, waste management, utilities or infrastructure for which a rural location is essential;*
- ii. Appropriate recreational use;*
- iii. The re-use or adaptation of existing buildings particularly to assist the diversification of the rural economy; or*
- iv. development which is approved under other policies of the plan.”*

- 2.7 Policy ENV9 (*Development Involving Horses*) is a permissive policy and states:

“Horse related developments, including stables, field shelters, riding schools, stud farms and livery stables will be permitted if they would not:

- i. result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) or prejudice viable agricultural units;*
- ii. unacceptably affect the character and appearance of the locality;*
- iii. cause potential danger or nuisance to neighbours, pedestrians, vehicles or horse riders; or*
- iv. result in the overuse of local bridleways or open space.”*

- 2.8 Other relevant policies include ENV 27 – Design of New Developments.

3 Design

Amount, Scale and Height

- 3.1 The proposed building is a portal-framed steel structure measuring 30.5m x 18.0m (549m²) with a height to the eaves of 3.9m and height to the ridge of 6.19m, shown in DLP Architecture drawing P392 210.

Layout

- 3.2 The building would form part of an existing equestrian barn used by the business. It would share a common set of stanchions with the eastern elevation of the existing building and would cover a large part of a railed paddock area which is already used for training and teaching.
- 3.3 The internal configuration is open plan to enable unhindered exercising of horses and provision of lessons and therapy for riders.

Landscaping and Biodiversity

- 3.4 The immediate surrounding area comprises open fields and groups of farm buildings. The fields on the site are fenced into paddocks for grazing horses. The wider area comprises larger fields with hedgerow boundaries or stone walls.
- 3.5 Views of the site are only available off the seldom-used Farmers Arms Lane which accesses the site and other agricultural buildings on the lane. The new structure would be seen against the backdrop of the existing equestrian centre over a short distance and would minimise the effect on the openness and character of the area. Other views of the site are restricted by hedgerows and walls.
- 3.6 This is notwithstanding the fact that it would have the appearance of an agricultural building, similar to very many elsewhere in the locality. It is of utilitarian design and constructed in appropriate materials. The building would, therefore, not appear incongruous in its rural setting, and would respect local character.
- 3.7 There would be no requirement to remove or cut any hedgerows or trees to undertake the construction work or utilise the building.
- 3.8 The building would be sited on a small, post and rail-fenced paddock which is both intensively grazed by horses and also used for schooling and training. As a consequence there is little of ecological interest on the site.
- 3.9 No new access would be required.

Appearance

- 3.10 The building is a steel portal-framed structure, similar to other modern agricultural buildings in the area. It is intended to create a light and spacious environment which will provide protection from the elements and put both horse and rider at ease. This is particularly important when young children or riding for the disabled lessons are being undertaken.
- 3.11 The three external walls would comprise olive green vertical metal profiled sheeting with galvanised sliding doors to the north and south elevations.
- 3.12 The roof would be constructed with natural grey metal profile sheets which will blend into the backdrop of the sky, thus reducing any perceived visual impact. It would have 20 clear profile sheets to provide natural daylight at a density of two per bay, on either side of the roof.
- 3.13 The structure would be built to modern design standards set out in BS5502.
- 3.14 The rooflights will ensure additional internal lighting is minimised.

Community Safety

- 3.15 The site is frequented by members of the public and strict rules are displayed and enforced to ensure their safety. However, the provision of the covered schooling and tuition area will increase public and community safety as all horses will be enclosed within the building until the end of the session.
- 3.16 As there are no footpaths or other means of access to the site there will be no access to the general public. Access to the site is via the existing track and it is not expected that the proposal will have any impact upon users of the highway or any public footpaths.
- 3.17 The nearest public footpath is some 300m away, to the north.

Environmental Sustainability

- 3.18 The building will be sourced from local fabricators and the timber will be responsibly sourced.
- 3.19 The provision of the covered area will mean that events will not have to be cancelled, or abandoned part way through during adverse weather. On such occasions the lessons have either had to be rescheduled, entailing additional journeys to the site by riders, or the lesson fees are foregone by the applicants, thereby losing income.

- 3.20 It is considered that the proposed building will have a minimal environmental impact on wildlife and vegetation as the site is improved pasture.
- 3.21 The structure will give the Applicants the opportunity to provide lessons at a time suitable to the riders, rather than when the weather dictates.
- 3.22 The site is already in equestrian use and so no land will be lost from agriculture.

4 Access

Vehicular and Transport Links

- 4.1 No change is proposed to the vehicular access to the site, or the parking layout, which includes the provision of 12 spaces for visitor and staff use, together with parking and turning for horse box and trailer combinations.
- 4.2 It is not anticipated that the proposed development would result in an increase in users at any one particular time, however the proposal would allow for the site to be used on a regular basis regardless of weather conditions.
- 4.3 The site is located on the south side of the Farmer's Arms Lane, some 630m from its junction with the B4265, Wick Road, on the outskirts of St Brides Major.

Inclusive Access

- 4.4 Access into the site would be from the Farmers Arms Lane. It is not expected that the development would have any detrimental effect on users of the road or local footpaths as the use already occurs and there have been no issues.
- 4.5 Access to the site by both able and disabled people is important to the business because a large part of activities on the site relate to riding for the disabled and working with special needs groups. As a consequence the site has been developed with such people in mind.

Traffic Movements

- 4.6 There is unlikely to be any change in the number of vehicle movements along the highway, although the timings of journeys to the site may be staggered in the future because lessons would not be weather dependent. Journeys may actually decrease because lessons would not have to be postponed after arrival due to adverse weather.

Justification

- 4.7 Enfy's Farm extends to some 34.4ha (85 acre) of grassland. Farms of such size often find it difficult to survive financially in the absence of alternative income or diversification.
- 4.8 In 2000 Mr and Mrs Davies established St Brides Riding and Trekking Centre. It has become a very successful business and is well-known over a wide area for its work with the Riding for the Disabled Association and also the provision of riding lessons of a very individual nature including to people who want privacy and discretion.
- 4.9 The business is run by Julie and Chris Davies with two of their children and employs 6-10 local people on a full- and part-time basis. There are approximately 30 horses on the site.
- 4.10 As well as providing riding lessons for people of all abilities, the business also trains young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to interact positively with other members of society with a view to being employable in the longer term. They have also established their own Pony Club, The Vale Pony Club, which is part of the Pony Club of Great Britain.
- 4.11 The riding for the disabled work is particularly noteworthy and is a great therapeutic benefit to those who participate. Some participants travel a great distance to take advantage of the facilities provided by the business.
- 4.12 It has been found that riding activities are particularly beneficial to disabled people because it strengthens the rider's body and improves balance, posture and co-ordination and at the same time provides physiotherapy. The specialist training involved is far more effective if undertaken in a sheltered environment, such as that proposed.
- 4.13 It is noted that after a number of sessions there is marked improvement in many of the attendees. In recognition of this relatives often want to come to view the sessions and stay for short breaks afterwards. This benefits local bed and breakfast and hotel businesses and thus the business brings additional benefits to other aspects of the rural economy.
- 4.14 There is considerable government support for this type of development both in planning policy and other recreation and sports policies which support the development of the equestrian industry, as detailed in the *Strategy for the Horse Industry* and supported by the British Equestrian Federation Facilities Strategy for Equestrian Sport and Recreation.

- 4.15 The clear span building, with an area extending to 30.5m x 18.0m (549m²), would be fully capable of use for a wide variety of equestrian pursuits including dressage and show jumping training, for which adequate space is required. It would also enable several horses to be ridden at the same time on lead reins, as would be necessary for novice riders or riding for the disabled.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The proposed equestrian building at St Brides Major Riding and Trekking Centre will allow a well-established business to provide valuable teaching and training to a wide variety of riders throughout the year, irrespective of weather conditions, which has been a problem in the past.
- 5.2 The lack of indoor training and riding facilities limits the potential of St Brides Major Riding and Trekking Centre to offer a full and regular programme of activities for the Riding for the Disabled Association, both in terms of providing opportunities for disabled people to ride horses, and in providing a centre for training volunteers and instructors.
- 5.3 The size of the building is matched to the requirements of the business, taking into account the various types of activities which are undertaken on the site.
- 5.4 The proposed development would adjoin an existing building. The development would appear similar to local modern agricultural buildings and would assimilate into the local area.
- 5.5 The proposed development would not harm the visual amenity and it is not considered necessary to require a landscaping scheme.
- 5.6 Biodiversity will not be affected by the proposed development.