



PLANNING STATEMENT

Planning Applications to vary: Condition 3 of
Planning Permission ref. FG/28/93 for the
construction and use of an indoor riding arena;
Condition 2 of Planning Permission FG/103/97 for
the construction and use of an outdoor riding
arena; both located at Ferring Country Centre, Rife
Way, Ferring, West Sussex BN12 5JZ

October 2021 v.1

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Ferring Country Centre in support of two applications made to Arun District Council to vary conditions attached to Planning Permissions ref. FG/28/93 and FG/103/97. Those planning permissions relate to the Centre's indoor and outdoor riding arenas.
- 1.2 The two conditions that the Centre is seeking to amend limit the uses that can be made of the two riding arenas. Over the period of time that has elapsed since permission was granted for the construction and use of the two riding arenas the range of core services and supporting ancillary functions undertaken at the Centre has expanded. The limitations placed on the use of the riding arenas when permission was originally granted in 1993 and 1997 are no longer appropriate to the uses now made of those facilities by the Centre.
- 1.3 The Centre is an established independent charity and social enterprise with a core mission of enhancing the lives of adults with learning disabilities by providing training and support that enables them to gain employment or engage in voluntary work, and to be active participants in the local community. The Centre was originally established in 1986 and now includes a range services and facilities open to the general public that operate on a commercial basis, generating income streams for the Centre that are independent of state support and allowing further investment in the facilities and services offered to our core customers.
- 1.4 The site has a complex planning history, as development has progressed over the years on a project-by-project basis. A recent review of the extant planning permission relating to the riding therapy and riding school elements of the Centre highlighted the limitations placed by existing conditions on the use of the riding arenas.

2. The site and the surrounding area

- 2.1 Ferring Country Centre is an independent charity providing access to training and development opportunities and associated care and support for adults with learning disabilities. The Centre was originally established in 1986 when a group composed of the parents of adults with learning disabilities acquired the site of a former riding school. The Centre was established to provide opportunities for its customers to engage in a range of activities beneficial to the physical and mental wellbeing and to their development of independent life-skills, including horticulture, animal husbandry and horse care and riding. Since the establishment of the Centre the range of services on offer and the associated on-site facilities and infrastructure have developed, including facilities and services open to the general public.
- 2.2 The Centre occupies a site that extends to a total area of c.12.8 hectares of which the majority is comprised of fields in grazing use by the Centre's animals partitioned by a combination of post and rail and post and wire fencing. The site is located at the western end of Rife Way and lies to the immediate west of the settlement boundary of the village of Ferring. The site is dissected by the Ferring Rife, which separates four fields and the site access road to the east from the main part of the site to the west of the watercourse.
- 2.3 The developed area of the site extends to c.2.3 hectares and is situated in the eastern part of the site to the west of the Ferring Rife. The developed part of the site is occupied by a mixture of buildings and structures including:
- The main building has a footprint of c.1,600 square metres. The north-eastern part of the building houses classrooms, dining facilities, lockers and toilet and washing facilities for use by the Centres core customers on the ground floor and staff offices, meeting rooms and welfare facilities on the first floor; the southern and north-western parts of the main building are occupied by the stables, associated storage areas and staff accommodation. The building is steel framed and clad and has an appearance characteristic of agricultural buildings. An area of car parking with spaces for c.60 cars is situated immediately to the south of the main building and is composed of a permeable mesh and aggregate surface. To the immediate east of the main building is the internal site access road which links to a further area of car parking to the north and to the main site access to the east.

- The indoor riding arena has a footprint of c.970 square metres and is situated immediately to the west of the main building. The building is steel framed and clad and has an appearance characteristic of agricultural buildings. The indoor school is accessible from the stables situated in the main building.
- The outdoor riding arena has a footprint of c.1,000 square metres and is situated to the immediate west of the indoor riding arena. The outdoor arena is defined by a post and rail perimeter fence and is surfaced with a sand and rubber mixture. To the north the arena is bounded by an area of raised decking with fields beyond, to the south and west by hedges or tree belts with fields beyond and to the east by a grass area that separates it from the indoor riding arena.
- The garden centre area of the site has a footprint of c.2,000 square metres and is located immediately to the north of the main building. The garden centre encompasses areas of hardstanding, a number of polytunnels, a glasshouse and a covered walkway that affords access to the café, children's play area and small animal farm to the north.
- The café building and its adjoining outdoor terraces have a footprint of 513 square metres and are located immediately to the north of the garden centre area of the site. To the immediate north of the café building is a children's play area and the access to the small animal farm.
- The small animal farm occupies the most northerly part of the site and is composed of a mixture of barns and outside enclosures in which the Centre's farm animals are housed. Each enclosure is designed to address the particular welfare requirements of the animals that it houses and to enable visitors to safely view the animals. The enclosures are connected by walkways that afford access to all visitors.

2.4 The Country Centre is located within the East Preston to Ferring gap between settlements. That gap separates the village of Ferring in the east from that of East Preston in the west and includes land to the north of the A259 (Littlehampton Road) and the east of the A280 (Angmering Bypass) up to the borough boundary with Worthing to the east and with the South Downs National Park to the north. The land to the west and south of the Country Centre is predominantly in agricultural use, interspersed with residential properties and land in private equestrian use. To the north the Country Centre is bounded by the Portsmouth to Brighton main rail line, beyond which is land in residential or retail use with the route of the A259 (Littlehampton Road) further north. To the east the Country Centre's land adjoins the Onslow Caravan Park and the settlement boundary of the village of Ferring. Access to the Country Centre is achieved via Rife Way which is subject to residential development and connects the centre to the main centre of the village of Ferring.

- 2.5 The Country Centre site is not subject to any landscape, ecological or heritage designations. The Ferring Rife and its associated corridor which separates the main part of the Centre to the west from the four fields and access road to the east is designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). The closest Listed Building from which the Country Centre and could be visible is situated 730 metres to the south and is separated from the Centre by intervening farmland of a flat and open character. The Country Centre is located c.1.1 kilometres to the south of the boundary of the South Downs National Park. The Country Centre site is dissected by a number of public footpaths.
- 2.6 Parts of the Country Centre site are located within the floodplain of the Ferring Rife, a main river that is subject to management by the Environment Agency. To the west of the Ferring Rife the south-eastern corner of the Country Centre site – the area occupied by the main car park – is subject to a combination of Zone 2 (0.1-1.0% AEP) and Zone 3 (>1.0% AEP) fluvial flood risk. The majority of the main site to the west of the Ferring Rife is classed as Zone 1 (<0.1% AEP) for fluvial flood risk. To the east of the Ferring Rife the fields to the south of the Country Centre access road as classed as Zone 3 (>1.0% AEP) for fluvial flood risk with those to the north of the access road and the road itself classed as a combination of Zones 3, 2 and 1.

3. Planning history

- 3.1 Ferring Country Centre has been present and operational on the current site since it's establishment in 1986. Prior to that the site was occupied by a riding school which operated as a private enterprise. The planning history for the site since the establishment of the Country Centre is summarised in the table below.
- 3.2 The two permissions to which the current applications relate are highlighted below in bold. Both permissions were granted subject to conditions that limit the use of the riding arenas.

Planning Reference	Site & Description of Development	Decision & Date
FG/164/85	Land at western end of Rife Way, Ferring – Change of use from riding school to riding/ agricultural / horticultural training centre	Approve conditionally 12-05-87
FG/152/87	Erection of temporary wooden hut approx. 32 ft x 20 ft x 16 ft high to uppermost of pitched roof Siting of caravan temporarily to use as domestic training unit and burglary deterrent Erection of greenhouse	Allowed on Appeal 16-02-89
FG/172/87/A	4 non illuminated advertisement boards	Refused 02-11-87
FG/69/88	Installation of Klargester Biodisc B3 sewerage disposal system	Approve conditionally 13-06-88
FG/28/93	Erection of single storey building to enclose existing outdoor riding arena.	Approve conditionally 21-07-1993
FG/103/97	Construction of outdoor riding area (40 metres x 25 metres).	Approve conditionally 22-01-1998
FG/61/02	Prefabricated agricultural building to replace existing miscellaneous ones, for horticultural / equestrian activity.	Approve conditionally 10-09-02
FG/103/04	Erection of new glass house & replacement of potting shed in new location.	Approve conditionally 07-09-04
FG/156/09/CLP	Erect a 2m high galvanised steel palisade, clad with 'w' section profile palisade pales with triple point top, on the southern boundary of our land. this to be erected on the north side of a public footpath leading west from the rife (2114/1).	PP not required 01-04-10
FG/60/10	Change of use of glasshouse to retail trading space	Approve conditionally with S106 Agreement 19-08-10

Planning Reference	Site & Description of Development	Decision & Date
FG/173/10	Change of use from storage (B8) to tea and snack bar(A3)	Approve conditionally 22-02-11
FG/81/12	Erection of wooden building.	Approve conditionally 29-08-12
FG/144/12/DOC	Application for approval of details reserved by condition 3 following a grant of planning approval FG/81/12/ - material samples.	Discharge of conditions approved 02-11-12
FG/136/14/PL	Amendments to ground floor layout including replacement WC's and new staircase to 1st floor (20sq.m), new layout and staircase to existing 1st floor store, layout to include; offices, meeting room, WC and staffroom (215sq.m), new 60no space car park adjacent to Country Centre (2950sq.m), new bitumen surface construction to section of existing pedestrian path (176.5sq.m).	Approve conditionally 08-12-14
FG/102/15/DOC	Application for approval of matters reserved by condition imposed under FG/136/14/PL relating to condition 3 for tree retention and condition 5 traffic management.	Discharge of condition approved 11-08-15
FG/129/16/PL	Removal of 4 No. existing structures & erection of 2 No. barns to be used in conjunction with on-site activities.	Approve conditionally 08-11-16
FG/31/17/PL	Installation of new café building and relocation of 1 No. existing glasshouse.	Approve conditionally 27-04-17
FG/151/17/DOC	Application for approval of matters reserved by condition imposed under FG/129/16/PL relating to condition 3 for surface water drainage.	Discharge of condition approved 19-01-18
FG/203/18/PL	Variation of condition 2 imposed under FG/31/17/PL relating to approved plans (new building more central to shop and ticket office closer to activities they serve).	Approve 07-01-19
FG/181/18/PL	Erection of a single storey, timber structure woodworking shop.	Approve conditionally 26-07-19
FG/62/19/DOC	Approval of details reserved by condition imposed under FG/203/18/PL relating to conditions 3-surface water drainage, 4-details of materials & finishes, 5-Construction Management Plan & 6-covered & secure cycle parking spaces.	Discharge of condition approved 09-08-19
FG/115/19/PL	Removal of condition 3 imposed under FG/181/18/PL relating to surface water drainage	Approve 22-11-19
FG/22/20/PL	Timber frame barrel vault canopy with fire retardent Opal 60 fabric roof cladding	Approve conditionally 09-04-20

4. The proposed changes to the permitted development

- 4.1 Condition 3 of planning permission ref. FG/28/93 for the construction of a single storey building to enclose the existing outdoor riding arena reads as follows:

“The proposed building shall be used for riding and training by and for the mentally handicapped and disabled only and for no other purpose.”

- 4.2 Condition 2 of planning permission ref. FG/103/97 for the construction of an outdoor riding arena measuring 25 metres by 40 metres reads as follows:

“The proposed outdoor riding area shall be used for riding and training by and for the mentally handicapped and disabled only and for no other purpose.”

- 4.3 As currently worded those conditions prevent the use of the two riding arenas for a range of necessary activities – such as the training of staff and volunteers and the training of new horses, or the management of sick or injured horses – associated with and ancillary to the core business of the Country Centre. It is therefore proposed that the wording of the two conditions be amended as follows:

FG/28/93 Condition 3 – “The proposed building shall be used for riding and training by customers, staff and volunteers of Ferring Country Centre, for purposes associated with and ancillary to the functioning of the Centre’s stables, and for purposes incidental to the operation of the Centre as a training, care and support facility for adults with learning disabilities.”

FG/103/97 Condition 2 – “The proposed outdoor riding area shall be used for riding and training by customers, staff and volunteers, for purposes associated with and ancillary to the functioning of the Centre’s stables, and for purposes incidental to the operation of the Centre as a training, care and support facility for adults with learning disabilities.”

- 4.4 The proposed rewording of the conditions would retain the level of control over the use of the site, which is situated within a strategic gap between settlements and is therefore in a location in which development is not normally permitted, sought by the original conditions but would be take account of the reasonable needs of the Centre to make appropriate use of the existing developed spaces within the site.

5. Planning policy considerations

5.A National Planning Policy

5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021) set national planning policy for England and observes that the core purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (paragraph 7, p.5). The concept of sustainable development is interpreted in the context of the NPPF as encompassing social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection.

5.2 Paragraphs 55 to 58 (pp.15-16) of the NPPF address the use of planning conditions and obligations in the granting of planning permission for development that would otherwise be unacceptable. Paragraph 56 (p.16) of the NPPF states:

“Planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects. ...!”

5.3 As discussed in section 4 of this planning statement condition 3 of planning permission ref. FG/28/93 (indoor riding arena) and condition 2 of planning permission ref. FG/103/97 (outdoor riding arena) preclude the use of the riding arenas for a range of activities that are necessary to the safe operation of the Country Centre’s established riding and stables unit. As currently worded the conditions restrict the use of the arenas to, “...riding and training by and for the mentally handicapped and disabled only and for no other purpose.”. As noted previously the conditions preclude the use of the schools for activities including but not limited to, the training of staff and volunteers, for the training of new horses, or for the management of sick or injured horses. Neither of the conditions requires that monitoring and reporting on the use of the riding arenas be undertaken and submitted to the planning authority.

5.4 It is recommended that, as currently worded, condition 3 of planning permission ref. FG/28/93 and condition 2 of planning permission ref. FG/103/97 are neither enforceable nor reasonable. On that basis the conditions do not satisfy the six tests set out in the NPPF and require amendment.

5.B Local Planning Policy

5.5 The Local Development Plan relevant to the Country Centre consists of the adopted Arun Local Plan 2011-2031 (dated July 2018), the West Sussex Waste Local Plan 2014-2031 (dated April 2014), the West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan 2018-2033 (dated July 2018), and the Ferring Neighbourhood Development Plan 2014-2029

(dated November 2014). The Country Centre is not used for activities that fall within the scope of either the Waste Local Plan or the Joint Minerals Local Plan and the policies set out in those plans are therefore not considered further in this planning statement.

5.8.1 Ferring Neighbourhood Development Plan

5.6 Policy 1A (Spatial Plan for the Parish) Ferring Neighbourhood Development Plan (FNDP) states that development outside the established settlement boundary that does not accord with development plan policies relating to the control of development within the countryside will be resisted. The extant Local Plan at the time of the adoption of the FNDP was the Arun Local Plan 2003 which has since been replaced by the Arun Local Plan 2011-2031.

5.7 The planning permissions relating to the construction and use of the indoor and outdoor riding arenas at Ferring Country Centre were granted prior to the adoption of the FNDP. The proposals to update the conditions that currently limit the use of indoor and outdoor riding arenas to a specific group of individuals would not result in any additional physical development within the East Preston to Ferring Strategic Gap.

5.8.2 Arun Local Plan 2011-2031

5.8 The Arun Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in July 2018 and is the main part of the development plan relevant to the Country Centre site. Policies in the Arun Local Plan relevant to the indoor and outdoor riding arenas at the Country Centre include:

- Policy SD SP1: Sustainable Development.
- Policy SD SP2: Built-up Area Boundary.
- Policy C SP1: Countryside.
- Policy SD SP3: Gaps between Settlements.
- Policy EQU DM1: Equine development.

5.9 With reference to Policy SD SP1 (Sustainable development) the Country Centre is an established independent charity and social enterprise that works to enable and promote social inclusion, a key element of sustainable development. The Centre's work is focussed on adults with learning disabilities, a group of people who face particular challenges in contemporary society and who are often disadvantaged in terms of access to training and work. The Centre provides its core customers with opportunities to develop both life and employment skills and to gain confidence in participating with the wider community in a safe and supportive space.

- 5.10 The Centre is an important local employer, with some 78 full time and part-time staff currently employed across a wide range of roles. The Centre actively supports its staff and volunteers to develop new skills and competencies. The commercial aspects of the Centre, such as the café, garden centre and riding school contribute positively to the local economy and provide alternative sources of income to state funding that enable the Centre to further invest in the facilities and services offered to its core customers.
- 5.11 The site occupied by the Centre extends to c. 12.8 hectares and is mainly composed of open land in grazing use interspersed with areas of semi-natural habitat, with built infrastructure concentrated in an area of c.2.3 hectares. The Centre is located in open countryside beyond the settlement boundary of the village of Ferring and is dissected by the Ferring Rife SNCI. The Centre takes seriously its role as a custodian of the countryside and the natural environment and seeks to manage and maintain its land in ways compatible with the protection of the environment.
- 5.12 With reference to Policies SD SP2 (Built up area boundary), C SP1 (Countryside) and SD SP3 (Gaps between settlements) the Centre has been present in its current location since 1986. The site was formerly occupied by a riding school that operated as a private enterprise. Planning permission for the construction and use of the indoor riding arena and the outdoor riding arena that form an established part of the Centre's infrastructure was granted in 1993 and 1997 respectively. The presence of the two arenas has therefore been deemed acceptable in planning terms, subject to those facilities being used solely for the benefit of the Centre. The conditions attached to the planning permissions for the indoor and outdoor riding arenas that sought to limit the uses to which those facilities could be put were intended to protect the integrity of the countryside and the East Preston to Ferring gap between settlements. As currently worded those conditions do not comply with national planning policy and guidance and it is therefore proposed that they be amended. The proposed revised conditions would retain control over activities within the countryside and the gap between settlements whilst not placing unreasonable restrictions on the use of established infrastructure within the Country Centre.
- 5.13 With reference to Policy EQU DM1 (Equine development) the Centre is an established equine facility and the changes proposed to the conditions attached to the planning permissions for the indoor and outdoor riding arena would not materially alter the established equine development.

6. Summary and conclusion

- 6.1 Ferring Country Centre is seeking to amend planning conditions attached to the planning permissions granted in 1993 and 1997 for the indoor and outdoor riding arenas that form an established part of the Centre's infrastructure. A recent review of the extant planning permission relating to the riding therapy and riding school elements of the Centre highlighted the limitations placed by existing conditions on the use of the riding arenas. Those limitations are not compatible with the safe operation of the Centre's riding and stables business unit and changes to the conditions are therefore proposed by the applications to which this planning statement relates.
- 6.2 The changes proposed in section 4 of this planning statement would not result in any material change in the uses that are currently and have historically been made of the two riding arenas. Both are used for purposes that are supportive of and consistent with the Centre's core mission of enhancing the lives of adults with learning disabilities by providing training and support that enables them to gain employment or engage in voluntary work, and to be active participants in the local community.

