

Officer Report

Application No.	25/1227/FH
Site Address	LAND ADJOINING THRIFT FARM, STRAIGHT LANE, BROOKLAND
Officer Name	Ross McCardle
Proposal	Change of use of land from agricultural to the keeping of horses, including installation of an access track, and erection of replacement stables and sand school.

Recommendation

Report Number	RD-439195
Recommended Decision	Recommended to be Approve with Conditions
Recommendation Date	20 January 2026

Report

SITE

The application site is a roughly rectangular parcel of agricultural/grazing land extending to approximately 0.9ha, situated on the northern side of the A259 Straight Lane to the east of Brookland and west of Brenzett. It is flat, level, enclosed with a low timber fence, features sporadic tree planting along the side and rear boundaries, and benefits from an existing gated access onto the highway.

There is a dilapidated stable building in the far NW corner and a derelict horse manege to front of the stables, both accessed via an informal track running along the western site boundary.

To the west is the field used for the Brenzett bootfair, with agricultural land on the other sides.

The following constraints are relevant:

- Outside any defined settlement boundary.
- Within FZ2.
- Local Landscape Area.

RELEVANT HISTORY

Enforcement file 25/0092/CM relates to construction of the access track.

PROPOSAL

This application seeks planning permission for change of use from agricultural to the keeping of horses, including installation of an access track, and erection of replacement stables and sand school.

The proposed stables would sit in the same position as the existing buildings. They would be of a standard design with a pitched roof and timber cladding and would measure a maximum of 4.8m deep x 10.8m wide x 3.1m tall.

The proposed sand school would be sited to the front of the stable building, would measure 18m x 9m with a 1.5m timber post and rail fencing surround and sand and rubber surfacing.

The Planning Statement sets out that the access track would be surfaced with permeable “rural appropriate” material.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Environment Agency: refer to standing advice.

KCC Ecology: no objection subject to conditions, but advise that details to be submitted under the statutory BNG condition will need to be amended from their current form to ensure barn owls and reptiles are not harmed.

REPRESENTATIONS

None received.

PUBLICITY

The application was publicised in accordance with the regulations.

RELEVANT POLICIES

The Development Plan comprises the Places and Policies Local Plan 2020 and the Core Strategy Review (March 2022).

Core Strategy Review (March 2022):

- SS1 - Spatial strategy
- SS3 - Place shaping and sustainable settlements strategy
- CSD3 - Rural and tourism development

Places and Policies Local Plan 2020:

- HB1 - Quality places
- HB8 - Alterations and extensions
- T2 - Parking standards
- NE2 - Biodiversity
- NE4 - Equestrian development

NPPF and NPPG:

The following sections of the NPPF are relevant to this application:

Paragraph 11 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 47 - Applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan.

Section 2. Achieving sustainable development

Section 4. Decision-making

Section 6. Building a strong, competitive economy

Section 12. Achieving well-designed places

Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

APPRAISAL

Principle

Keeping of horses is an intrinsically rural use and broadly supported by adopted policy NE4 subject to certain criteria. The principle of development is therefore acceptable.

Flood risk

The site is within FZ2 but the proposal would not increase the vulnerability classification or result in increased flood risk either on- or off-site.

The EA do not comment and refer the Council to the national standing advice. Stables are not specifically listed within the .gov vulnerability classifications; the closest comparison would be outdoor sports and recreation, which is considered to be “water compatible.” The advice for water compatible developments refers (amongst others) to adaptations to buildings to minimise flood risk and ensure means of escape.

It is not considered that the proposal would contradict policy in this respect and I therefore have no objections in this regard.

Layout, scale, design, and visual amenity

The proposed stables would be of a relatively standard scale and design, and would sit comfortably within the context of the site and the wider countryside without being incongruous or harmful to visual amenity. The condition below secures a dark-stained finish, which would be appropriate for a rural location and would visually recede the structure within the landscape. The existing boundary planting and distance from the public highway would also help soften impact of the development.

The proposed sand school would be a low-level structure that would not be prominent or intrusive within views. A condition is set out below to prevent the installation of lighting, which would be very prominent and harmful within the landscape, particularly during the winter months.

The access track, subject to materials as secured by the conditions below, would be of a typically rural appearance and would not be harmful to the character or appearance of the countryside.

I therefore consider that the proposals would not be harmful to visual amenity, or to the character or appearance of the Local Landscape Area.

No details of manure storage have been provided within the proposed layout, but given the location of the site away from any sensitive receptors I do not consider this to be a concern. The condition below allows for the keeping of a manure trailer on site.

Residential amenity

The site is remote from any permanent residential dwellings and therefore there would be no impacts in this regard.

Highways and parking

The site has an existing access onto the A259 with an area to the front of the existing gate for vehicles to pull off the highway and clear visibility in both directions. There is also space within the site for vehicles to park and turn.

The condition recommended restricts the site to private use only which will minimise vehicle movements to/from the site.

I therefore have no objections in this regard.

Grazing land

Two stables are shown on the proposed drawings; the site is large enough to provide grazing and exercise space for two horses in conjunction with supplemental feeding and good land management practices, as referred to within the British Horse Society guidance. I therefore have no objections in this regard.

Ecology and biodiversity

KCC Ecology have no objections subject to the conditions below, and I am therefore satisfied that the development would not unacceptably harm ecology and would contribute positively to biodiversity.

KCC have advised that the proposed biodiversity enhancement plan would need to be amended to ensure no harm to owls, but this could be addressed by a suitably worded condition. Subject to this, there are no objections on these grounds.

HUMAN RIGHTS

I have also considered the human rights issues relevant to this application. In my view, the Appraisal section above and the Recommendation represents an appropriate balance between the interests and rights of the applicant (to enjoy his land subject only to reasonable and proportionate controls by a public authority) [and the interests and rights of those potentially affected by the proposal (to respect for private life and the home and peaceful enjoyment of their properties)] and the wider public interest.

PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

In determining this application, regard has been had to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set down in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, in particular with regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. It is considered that the application proposals would not undermine objectives of the Duty.

It is considered that the application proposals would not conflict with objectives of the Duty.

DUTY TO COOPERATE

In accordance with paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), February 2019 the Council takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions. We work with applicants/agents in a positive and creative way by offering a pre-application advice service and, where possible, suggesting solutions to secure a successful outcome and as appropriate, updating applicants / agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application.

In this instance additional information was requested and received.

RECOMMENDATION

Taking the above into account it is recommended that planning permission should be granted.

Recommended Conditions (13)

1

The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which the permission is granted.

Reason: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2

No development shall take place other than in accordance with the following approved plans, drawings, and documents:

Planning Statement.

Flood Risk Assessment (ref. KRS.0919.001.R.001.A).

Location plan.

Drawing PP-02-PS-A1 – proposed stable plans and elevations.

Drawing 25054TS-PP-03-SP-A1 – existing and proposed block plan.

Drawing 25054TS-PP-04 – Sand school details.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

3

Notwithstanding the submitted details, the external finishing materials on the stables and sand school hereby approved shall be dark-stained timber.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity.

4

No development beyond the removal of the existing structures shall take place until full details of both hard and soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include existing trees, shrubs and other features, planting schedules of plants, noting species (which shall be native species and of a type that will encourage wildlife and biodiversity), plant sizes and numbers where appropriate, means of enclosure, hard surfacing materials, and an implementation programme.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity of the area and encouraging wildlife and biodiversity.

5

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The works shall be carried out prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with the programme agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity of the area and encouraging wildlife and biodiversity.

6

Upon completion of the approved landscaping scheme, any trees or shrubs that are removed, dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within five years of planting shall be replaced with trees or shrubs of such size and species as may be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority, and within whatever planting season is agreed.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity of the area and encouraging wildlife

and biodiversity.

7

From commencement of works (including site/vegetation clearance), and for the duration of construction, all mitigation for breeding birds (including the installation of a barn owl box to the specifications and guidance provided by the Barn Owl Trust, available online at barnowltrust.org.uk), reptiles, great crested newts, and mammals (including hedgehogs and badgers), shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in section 4 of the Kent Sussex Ecology Ecological Impact Assessment & Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, version 1.0, dated October 2025.

Reason: In the interest of minimising harm to protected species.

8

A Biodiversity Gain Plan shall be prepared with consideration of the use or potential use of the baseline habitat modified grassland area by foraging barn owls and reptiles, as shown in the Kent Sussex Ecology Existing Habitat Plan Rev A for Land North of Straight Lane, New Romney on page 7 of the Kent Sussex Ecology Ecological Impact Assessment & Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, version 1.0, dated October 2025. The Biodiversity Gain Plan shall be informed by up-to-date and/or relevant ecology surveys as determined by a suitably qualified ecologist of the proposed habitat retention, creation and enhancement areas to be used to achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain. Up-to-date reptile surveys shall be used to demonstrate reptile presence or likely absence, and estimated population information to inform habitat creation, enhancement and management within the aforementioned modified grassland area.

Reason: In the interest of minimising harm to protected species.

9

No development beyond removal of the existing structures shall take place until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP), prepared in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan, and based on the most up-to-date and/or relevant ecology surveys as determined by a suitably qualified ecologist, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority and including:

- a) a non-technical summary;
- b) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;

c) the planned habitat retention, creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan, and to ensure habitat retention, creation and enhancement works protect and enhance habitat for protected and priority species and habitats;

d) the management measures to create and maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and

e) the monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the retained, created or enhanced habitat to be submitted to the local planning authority.

The retained, created and/or enhanced habitat specified in the approved HMMP shall be implemented, managed, maintained and monitored in accordance with the approved HMMP. Monitoring reports shall be submitted to local planning authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved HMMP.

Reason: To ensure the development delivers the required biodiversity net gain on site.

10

Monitoring reports demonstrating that the development is achieving the targeted biodiversity net gain in the approved biodiversity gain plan shall be submitted to local planning authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved HMMP. Remedial measures, if required, shall be specified within an updated HMMP submitted for approval in writing by the local planning authority at the same time as the submission of each monitoring report.

Reason: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site.

11

The stables and sand school hereby permitted shall only be used for the stabling and exercise of horses or ponies for private use and for no other purpose, including any commercial use.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and highway safety and convenience.

12

No more than two horses shall be kept on the site unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To prevent over-grazing.

13

With the exception of one trailer for the storage of manure, no external storage of materials or items of any kind including jumps, caravans, mobile homes, vehicles or trailers shall take place on the site.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.