

A planning guide to horses and stables



This guide is intended to provide some basic advice about the planning position in relation to the use of land or buildings for equine purposes in the Borough of Charnwood.

Background



Development involving horses (often referred to as 'horsiculture') is increasingly popular in the countryside. A growing number of farmers are seeking to diversify their activities, and commercial equestrian uses such as livery or riding schools are common options. Alternatively, farm land and/or buildings may be let to others who wish to establish separate businesses. These uses will almost always require planning permission and together with manèges, events, external lighting and higher levels of traffic, they can have a more intensive impact on the surrounding area than 'hobby horsiculture'.

With the decline in agricultural jobs, an increasing number of small parcels of land are being sold to people hoping to use them to keep their horses, and they may be unaware that this use is likely to require planning permission. Stables and shelters can be harmful to the appearance of the landscape, as can jumps, horse boxes and other equipment.

Planning permission

Some examples of common developments that would require planning permission are listed below:

- Use of land and/or buildings to keep horses for recreational use
- Use of land and/or buildings to keep horses for commercial purposes
- The erection of buildings to shelter horses or their provisions/equipment
- The erection of buildings in which to exercise horses
- The creation of a manège or other hard surface for similar purposes
- The erection of lighting columns to illuminate a manège or other area
- Stationing a caravan in a field for use in connection with 'horsiculture'
- Laying out or surfacing a vehicular access, hardstanding or other surface treatment in connection with keeping horses

If the main purpose of the use of the land is for the grazing of horses (i.e. they are being fed off the land rather than with imported food, and the land is not being used as a recreational/exercise area) then planning permission may not be required, as this could be considered an agricultural use. However, any buildings or other structures may still need permission.



Mobile field shelters may also not need planning permission depending on their size, construction, physical attachment to the ground and degree of permanence.

Stables (including tack rooms, hay stores, etc.)

These will only normally be permitted where they are:

- No larger than 3.6m x 3.6m x 3.4m high (measured externally), unless a larger size can be justified
- Sited within or immediately adjoining an existing farm building complex, or failing that a hedgerow or other landscape feature which affords substantial screening
- Provided with a safe highway access
- Designed and constructed in good quality, appropriate materials



Commercial equestrian uses

The development of commercial uses such as riding schools, arenas, stud farms, racing or livery stables in rural areas will be carefully controlled. Proposals for such uses will be rigorously examined to assess their impact, individually and cumulatively, on the amenity of the countryside and the local highway network.



It is always an advantage from a planning perspective for such schemes to utilise existing buildings rather than building new structures in the countryside. If residential accommodation is required then it should be sited next to existing residential accommodation. Small scale (up to ten horses) horse enterprises are considered a useful form of farm diversification when utilising existing farm buildings.

Planning considerations

Where planning permission is required, we will have regard to saved policy CT/13 of the 2004 Borough of Charnwood Local Plan, as well as policies CS10 and CS11 of the Charnwood Local Plan 2011-2028 Core Strategy, and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework. We will also consult with interested parties including Leicestershire County Council (in their capacity as the local highway authority), the Environment Agency (with regard to pollution, flooding and drainage issues) and our Environmental Health section (with regard to odours and flies, etc.). You should also contact the Council's [Building Control section](#) to check if building regulations approval is required.



Pre-application advice

To avoid any risk of enforcement action, please ensure you seek advice before carrying out any change of use or development. We offer a pre-application advice service, where a professional planning officer will discuss your proposals and advise you how to make them acceptable in planning terms. Details of the service can be found via [this link](#).

Applying for planning permission

Details about how to apply for planning permission, the methods available and the forms, documentation and fees required can be found on our website via [this link](#).

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