

Statement to accompany the planning application to change the use class of existing driving range facility to Dog Day Care at Mount Pleasant Farm, Jackroyd Lane, Upper Hopton, Mirfield, WF14 8EH

Proposal

The application is a request to change the use classification of an existing driving range facility to sui generis to enable the opening of a dog day care centre. This proposal will furthermore detail how the service will be operated.

Given that there will be minimal changes required to the building and that this proposal will generate employment and trade for the area, we ask that you view the application positively.

Background

It is estimated that one in four households in the UK own a dog. Mirfield, Hopton and the surrounding areas with their easy access to countryside, large number of parks and network of public rights of way, are ideal locations for dog lovers to live. Many dog owners want to ensure that their pet is exercised and well socialised or do not like leaving their dogs alone while they go out or are working.

The dog day care centre will provide a safe environment with constant supervision where owners can leave their dogs during the day and where they will be mentally and physically stimulated through structured play, exercise and rest.

Research has been carried out into other services of this nature provided in the locality and surrounding areas. It has become apparent through this research that there is a limited supply for this growing demand.

Further research into existing 'Doggy Day Care' users suggests that people are not willing to drive or deviate from their commute by more than 5 miles (or 2.5 miles in one direction) to take their dog to day care. It is deemed inconvenient for them to travel a great distance out of their way in morning and teatime traffic whilst going to and from work. From this research, it is assumed that the majority of customers will be coming from within a 2.5 or 5-mile radius to the proposed site. The maps below show the localities within a 2.5 and 5 mile radius of the proposed business.

Figure 1: Map showing a 2.5 mile radius from the proposal site

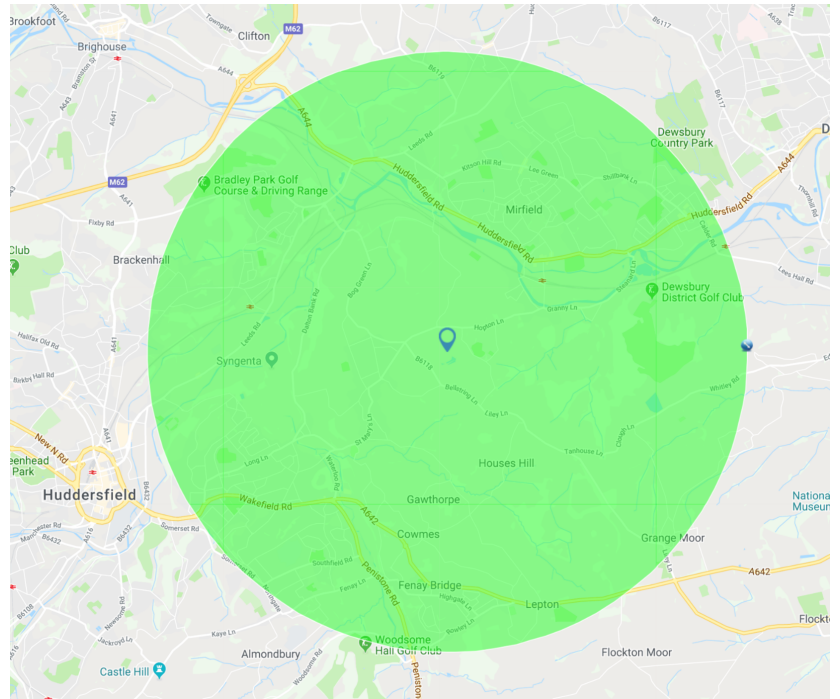
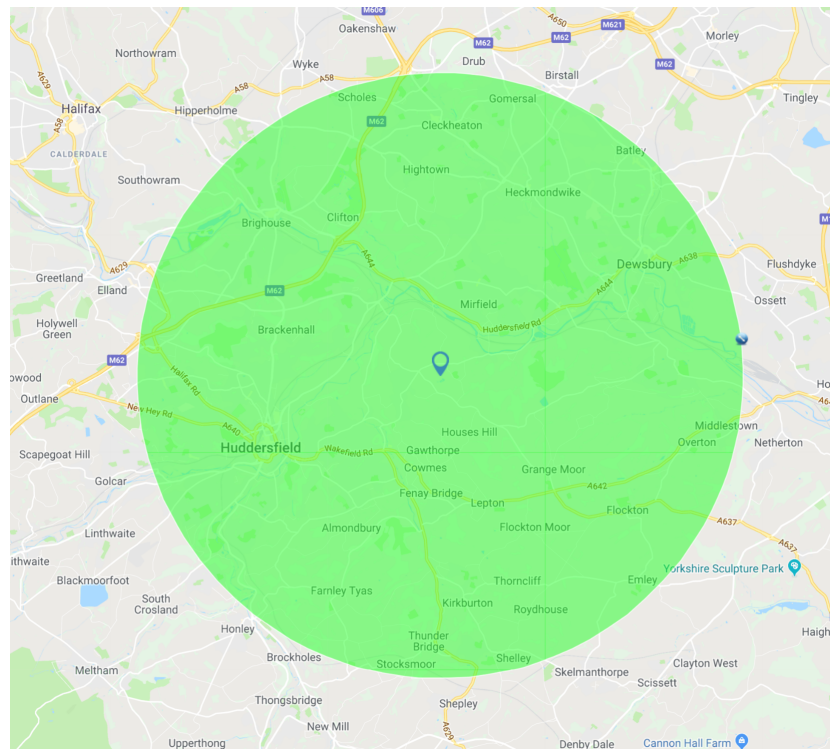


Figure 2: Map showing a 5 mile radius from the proposal site



Premises

The unit is ideally suited as a location to run this venture. It is easily accessible and situated close to the B6118, leading to the A642 and A644, which is a popular commuter route to and from both the M1 and M62 motorways between Wakefield, Huddersfield, Barnsley, Leeds and the wider area.

The proposed building is currently a driving range. There will be some alterations to the existing building, which are considered minor in the context of things. A structural survey has been carried out to support these changes and further support the use of the building for this proposed new use. The building and car park area are some distance away from the nearest residential building, the nearest of which is the applicants dwelling.

The space required in order to offer this type of service can only be found in more rural locations. The existing driving range building provides adequate space for 10 spacious comfy dog lounges, entrance/reception area, office and storage area and grooming room.

Internally we propose to use non-permanent partitioning to create separate areas within the unit. This will allow for segregation of the dogs depending on the number present of different ages or size. The partitions will be in line with the licence conditions for dog boarding establishments. The external appearance of the building will remain unchanged except for the addition of the open side external wall – of which all materials will match existing.

The outdoor space, which is also used in conjunction with the driving range, is a unique advantage for a facility of this nature. There are several acres of grassland, which would be utilised as outdoor walking and play space. At present this space is contained by a 7-meter high fence to ensure the golf balls stay within the perimeter. This would be replaced by a more secure 1.8m fencing – a further improvement to the wider visual context and locality.

Furthermore, at present this outdoor space is vastly open and uncharacteristic. The proposals would include planting to this area, to break up the mass and add character and interest to aid play and use of the space for the dogs.

The proposed opening hours are:

- Weekdays - 7.30am to 7pm
- Saturdays - 7.30am to 12pm
- Sundays and Bank Holidays - CLOSED

There are currently fourteen designated parking spaces on site. It is considered that customers will drop off and pick up, with a general drop off/collection time of around 5-10 minutes twice daily. It is considered that the proposed traffic counts and flows will be consistent to that of the current driving range business. Therefore there are no adverse highway impacts to consider.

Furthermore at present the driving range is open later in the evening and attracts young male adults who 'hang around' in the car park causing nuisance. Should this proposal be approved, the car park will no longer be open beyond the operating hours outlined above and will also no longer attract such clientele to the area.

Another concern linked to any form of animal business is disposal of waste. We have been researching this and have identified a number of environmentally friendly, safe, solutions. Bin storage and waste disposal will be catered for within the application site – as shown on the revised site plan. All waste will be disposed of correctly following current environmental guidance.

Business

We expect the business to provide employment initially for two full time workers based on the anticipated number of dogs accepted. The workforce will potentially increase as the business grows, but will always be limited to 30 dogs. We also hope to provide work experience opportunities for local schools and colleges.

The nature of the business is to provide day care support and services alongside dog grooming at the same site. The business will operate within the daily hours detailed above and will NOT be providing overnight care/support. Therefore, it will not be functioning as a boarding kennels. There are no intentions for the business to ever operate as a boarding kennels or for dogs to stay on the premises overnight.

We have close links with local veterinary practices and have considerable experience in the care and welfare of animals.

We will check all dogs' vet records to make sure they have up-to-date vaccinations and we will assess them to gauge their temperament and ensure they have had a certain amount of socialisation and training before accepting them to the centre.

The welfare of dogs is paramount and we will take all measures possible to ensure that they are not subject to anything that causes distress. One of the lounges will be a separate "quiet" area for dogs that are nervous or elderly and to allow for rest periods between play or exercise.

The business will be fully insured, CRB checked and local authority licensed.

We understand that noise nuisance may be a concern for a business of this type. The proposed site is located in a rural location with a very small number of properties within the vicinity, none of which are considered to be in close proximity. The nearest property of which, as previously mentioned if within the applicant's ownership. There is already a certain level of background noise from the existing driving range and its associated traffic. The dogs will have company, exercise and stimulation to counteract the main reasons for barking – loneliness, boredom, the desire for attention and anxiety.

Further, to minimise disruption from barking there are various steps we will take.

- There will be constant supervision of the dogs;
- The internal layout has been designed in such a way as to diminish noise; dogs will be in separate areas partitioned so they will not be unsettled by seeing dogs in other areas;
- Dogs will be encouraged to calm down if they are getting overexcited and allowed to spend some time in the “quiet” area;
- The public will only be allowed into the reception area / office at the front of the premises so interruptions will be limited;
- The fencing around the outdoor area will reduce the amount of external distraction and dampen any noise the dogs do make; and
- If a dog barks constantly they will be returned home or the owners contacted to collect it; they will be asked not to return the dog until they can show the problem has been addressed.

We believe that given the location of the unit and the measures listed noise nuisance will be negligible.