

**Consultation Response from KC,
 Policy**
2024/90292 Springfield Barn, Fieldhead Lane, Holme, Holmfirth, HD9 2QJ
Formation of practice arena
Date Responded:
Responding Officer:
Responding Ref:

This application is for the formation of a practice arena at Springfield Barn, Fieldhead Lane, Holme, Holmfirth, HD9 2QJ. The application site is in the green belt, therefore Green Belt policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Kirklees Local Plan apply.

The Local Plan was adopted on 27 February 2019. The Local Plan Strategy and Policies should be fully considered; however, the following response relates to specific Local Plan policies which are of particular relevance to the proposal, other policies that are not mentioned here may also apply.

NPPF & Kirklees Local Plan:
Green Belt:

The indicative plans for this application propose the formation of a 38 x 18M practice arena to train and exercise a mule. Given the topography of the land in this particular location, engineering ground works would be required as part of the proposal, to provide a level platform that would be able to accommodate the practice arena.

NPPF paragraph 154 states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings in the green belt as inappropriate except for a limited number of specified exceptions, including criteria b) the provision of appropriate facilities, in connection with an existing use or a change of use, for outdoor sport or recreation provided that the facility preserves the openness of the green belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. This is supported by Local Plan policy LP56 (facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and cemeteries). A practice arena is considered to be an appropriate facility to support outdoor recreation in the green belt and may therefore be acceptable subject to assessment against openness, the purposes of including land in the green belt and criteria within policy LP56.

NPPF paragraph 155 states that certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the green belt including criteria b) engineering operations, provided that openness is preserved and there is no conflict with the purposes of including land in the green belt. In this case, engineering operations would be required to create the level platform necessary to host the proposed practice arena.

Local Plan policy LP56 states that proposals will normally be acceptable provided that:

- a) the scale of the facility is no more than is reasonably required for the proper functioning of the enterprise or the use of the land to which it is associated;
- b) the facility is unobtrusively located and designed so as not to introduce a prominent urban element into a countryside location, including the impact of any new or improved access and car parking areas;
- c) in the case of all-weather riding arenas or other facilities for the exercising of horses, the degree of engineering operation required and the resultant re-grading of land, including any earth mounding and retaining structures, does not result in incongruous or discordant landform out of character with its setting that cannot be mitigated through the use of appropriate hard and soft landscape techniques.

In reference firstly to criteria a), information from various sources online indicates that, while there is no set size for practice arenas, the most common size for an arena is 20 x 40M. Given this proposed arena is set to be smaller than the common size, measuring 18 x 38M, it is not considered that the scale of the facility would be more than is reasonably required for the proper functioning of the enterprise or the use of the land.

In reference to criteria b), the plans and accompanying planning statement state that the practice arena would be surfaced in sand and fibre topped with a frost resistant fibre topper, and would be enclosed with timber post and rail fencing. It is not considered that the facility would be obtrusively located or designed in such a way that would result in a prominent urban element being introduced to a countryside location. The submitted plans do not show that there would be any alterations to the existing site access.

Giving regard finally to criteria c), the site which would host the proposed arena slopes down from Fieldhead Lane, and a significant degree of re-grading would be required in order to provide an appropriate flat surface. The degree of engineering operations required to form the facility, and the resultant re-grading of land, would result in a discordant landform out of character with its setting, contrary to the wording in policy LP56c). Such engineering operations would alter the land to appear out of character with the wider setting, and while it may be possible to mitigate the impact through landscaping, the planting itself may also be out of keeping with this open upland landscape, and could inflict further harm upon the openness of the green belt. Significant consideration must also be given in this case to the fact that the site to which this application relates is situated in a highly sensitive setting, directly adjoining land within the Peak District National Park. With this in mind, the proposal would fail to accord with criteria c) of policy LP56, and paragraphs 154b) and 155b) of the NPPF, and would therefore constitute inappropriate development in the green belt.

Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.