

East Cambridgeshire Local Plan Examination

Stage 2

Hearing Statement

On behalf of

Unex Group Holdings Limited

(Identification No. 738636)

Matter 10: Equine related activity

Relevant Policies - :LP9, LP10, LP11 and LP12

Issue 1: Whether the Local Plan has been positively prepared and whether it is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to the approach towards the horse racing industry, equine sports and recreation?

- 41. Are the policies of the Plan consistent with national policy, effective and justified in the context of the horse racing industry? How could the policies of the plan be more flexible and make greater provision for the equine industry and other horse related developments without undermining the wider objective of the Local Plan and remaining consistent with national policy?**

Response

- (i) Paragraph 1 of the Introduction to the National Planning Policy Framework, July 2018 “NPPF” states that “it provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced”.
- (ii) In Paragraph 11 of the NPPF it states that “plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change”.
- (iii) Paragraph 16 of the NPPF states that “Plans should be prepared positively, in a way that is aspirational but deliverable” and that they should “be shaped by early, proportionate

and effective engagement between plan-makers and communities, local organisations, businesses....”

- (iv) Paragraph 35 of the NPPF sets out the definitions of the various soundness tests. For a plan to be “justified” it must set out “an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence”.
- (v) The NPPF is particularly clear on the importance of supporting a prosperous rural economy. Paragraph 83 states that:

“Planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
 - b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
 - c) Sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside”
- (vi) Crucially, the NPPF recognises that some rural businesses will not fit neatly into sites within existing settlement boundaries. In paragraph 84 it states that, “Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.”
 - (vii) In paragraph 96, the NPPF also states that “access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities” and that “planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities”.
 - (viii) The criteria in the draft Local Plan Policy LP9: Equine Development are too restrictive and inflexible and do not recognise the nature of “specialist equestrian clusters” where groups

of 10 – 12 houses share a range of equestrian facilities such as indoor and outdoor riding arenas, stables, exercise tracks, gallops and paddocks etc.

- (ix) In draft Policy LP9, criterion “(a) The proposal is not sited in a prominent or isolated location away from existing buildings” should be omitted. It is inconsistent with NPPF paragraph 84 which recognises that some forms of rural enterprises by their very nature will need to be sited beyond existing settlements.
- (x) The space required for new, viable equestrian hubs which provide large riding arenas, gallops, exercise tracks, paddocks and stables, etc., mean that inevitably they are likely to be built in a location away from existing buildings
- (xi) A new criterion should be added to the Policy to enable the development of specialist equestrian clusters with residential accommodation being built adjacent to the equine facilities.
- (xii) It is suggested that the following wording would be appropriate:

“Specialist equestrian clusters with up to 12 houses will be permitted where the proposed development also includes a full range of equine facilities such as riding arenas, exercise tracks, paddocks, gallops and stables.”

- (xiii) It is suggested that the above new criterion should also be added to draft Policy LP11: Tourist Facilities and Visitor Attractions and to draft Policy LP12: Tourist Accommodation (excluding holiday cottages).
- (xiv) In Policy LP12 criterion (b) would need a consequential amendment to clarify that the specialist equestrian cluster is not expected to be within an existing development envelope.

Matter 13: Development in the countryside.

Issue 1: Whether the plan has been positively prepared and whether it is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to its approach towards development in the countryside?

Relevant policies – LP3, LP31, LP32

Development in the countryside

- 58. Is Policy LP31, and the approach to rural development, as set out in Parts A - H inclusive, justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**
- 59. What is the justification for the parameters set out in Policy LP32? Are they consistent with national policy? How does the policy reflect local circumstances and is it sufficiently flexible so as to be effective?**

Response

(a) As noted above, the NPPF is clear on the importance of supporting a prosperous rural economy. As currently drafted, Policy LP3 restricts development in the countryside other than to development which meets criteria (a) – (f). Criterion (c) is “equine related development (which satisfies Policy LP9)”.

(b) As noted above, Policy LP9 is too restrictive, inflexible and not in accordance with the NPPF.

(c) Policy LP3 should include the following new criteria:

“specialist equestrian clusters with up to 12 houses where the proposed development also includes a full range of equine facilities such as riding arenas, exercise tracks, paddocks, gallops and stables”.

(d) The same new criterion, as set out immediately above, should also be added to Policy LP31: Development in the Countryside. To tie in with the wording and format of the rest of the Policy LP31 it is suggested that the new criterion should be as follows:

“Part I – Specialist Equestrian Clusters

Specialist equestrian clusters with up to 12 houses will be permitted where the proposed development also includes a full range of equine facilities such as riding arenas, exercise tracks, paddocks , gallops and stables”.