



Introduction

Following a referral by a neighbouring equestrian client, Plan-A were instructed by the owner of the stables to advise in respect of an alleged breach of planning control. The LPA's Planning Enforcement Officer was investigating the basis on which a mobile home located at the site was being occupied, since it did not have planning permission for occupation on permanent basis.

The Site

The stables site formed part of a well-established area of equestrian land which had been sub-divided into a number of separate ownerships by the previous owners. Our client was now using it to develop a full competition livery business whilst also training and developing young showjumping horses for sale. However, they were also living in a mobile home located at the site despite the fact that it only had planning permission for occupation in connection with equine holidays.

Our Approach

Firstly, we undertook a review of relevant planning policy to establish the LPA's specific requirements concerning applications for rural worker's dwellings. This helped us to generate a checklist against which we could prepare a retrospective application to regularise occupation of the mobile home for a temporary three year period pending development of the business into a viable long-term enterprise.

Key to the success of the application was the need to pass both the 'functional' and 'financial' tests which the LPA use to confirm that there is an essential need for essential workers' accommodation to be provided on-site. Whilst the functional need is relatively straightforward to justify in support of equestrian establishments, in order to pass the financial test it was necessary for us to work with the owner to produce a robust three year financial forecast to demonstrate that the business was likely to be sufficiently profitable in the longer term.

As the LPA do not have appropriate in house expertise to assess the business case in support of the application, they engaged a specialist agricultural consultancy to independently assess the proposals. Their assessment concluded that our application provided sufficient justification in support of the temporary accommodation and permission was granted accordingly.

Plan-A have since been retained to prepare and manage an application for a permanent dwelling, following the owner's development of the business during the initial 3 year period.