

## Quick Guide: Best practice guidance for equestrian development and keeping of horses in the North Wessex Downs

### FOR THE LANDSCAPE ...

- Existing buildings utilised where possible; new stables and other structures kept to a minimum but of an adequate size to accommodate equestrian paraphernalia when not in use.
- New structures carefully sited and designed to minimize their impact on the landscape; located close to existing buildings wherever possible; constructed from appropriate vernacular materials and following the form of the landscape, avoiding prominent skyline sites and slopes.
- Artificial external lighting avoided where possible; if required, then designed to minimise light pollution (e.g. low level; directed downwards and fitted with timers).
- Landscape planting complements any existing trees and hedges; non-indigenous tree and shrub species avoided.
- Historic field boundaries, such as hedges, walls and fences maintained or extended; materials for new boundaries match the local vernacular wherever possible.
- Boundary features (e.g. hedges; dry stone walls) protected by fencing where necessary to prevent damage.
- Jumps, temporary fences and other equipment well maintained and removed when not in use.
- Existing gates and access points retained where possible; new gates match the local vernacular.
- Where pastures need to be subdivided into smaller paddocks, temporary electric fencing used in preference to more permanent structures.
- Dark green or brown electric fencing tape preferred

(just as visible as white to horses and far less intrusive in the landscape); used in conjunction with dark green or brown plastic posts, spaced closely enough to keep the tape taught; temporary fencing removed when not in use.

- Historic features, including ridge and furrow patterns, stone troughs and stone stiles protected from damage by equestrian uses.
- Concentration of horse paddocks and associated structures avoided to reduce risk of a cumulative detrimental impact on landscape character.

### FOR THE ENVIRONMENT ...

- Pastures carefully managed and of sufficient size to avoid over-grazing and consequent loss of biodiversity; professional advice used to prepare a pasture management plan where necessary.
- Additional or follow-up grazing by sheep to help improve visual appearance of pasture.

- Trees, including orchard trees, guarded to prevent the bark being browsed.

- Areas suffering from poaching or worn bare by horse grazing regularly rotated or rested to allow pasture recovery.

- Invasive and noxious plants (e.g. creeping thistle, ragwort and dock) controlled in accordance with environmental legislation and animal welfare best practice.

- Wildlife-rich ponds fenced to prevent trampling and poaching.

- Location and management of manure heaps in accordance with waste management regulations and best

practice to avoid risks of polluting watercourses and groundwater (e.g. no manure heap within 10m of any watercourse).

### FOR THE HORSE ...

- Preferably kept in social groups, reflecting the natural characteristic as a herd animal and to improve wellbeing (e.g. to reduce risks of undesirable behaviour, including walking up and down fence lines).

- Forage where possible comprising unfertilised, species-rich pasture with a wide range of grasses and herbs rich in both fibre and minerals (reflecting the extensive grazing systems under which horses evolved); opportunity to graze for up to 16 hours a day to obtain a steady flow of high-fibre forage through their digestive system.

- Adequate space for the animals to feed and exercise; ideally a minimum of one hectare per full-sized (500 kg) horse.

- Pastures kept clear of noxious plants such as ragwort and yew.

- Natural or purpose-built shelters available for protection in extreme weather conditions; some hardy breeds (e.g. native ponies), are capable of living outdoors all year round.

These notes and the illustration overleaf summarise the key guidance in the North Wessex Downs Position Statement on equestrian development and land management. The full document is available in the publications section at <http://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/>

April 2017/01



KEY

- GOOD PRACTICE
- PRACTICE TO AVOID