**Change of use of agricultural land for the erection of a stables block, arena with floodlights and roadways for the keeping of horses and associated works | Manse Road Dirleton East Lothian**

**Planning application no. 20/00229/P**

**Deadline for responses: Friday 17th April**

The Dirleton Village Association (the DVA) has considered the above application for planning permission. It seems to us that this, like a number of other applications in recent years relating to property within the Dirleton Conservation Area, is an insensitive, ill-considered, poor quality application which is not derived from any proper conservation area assessment and which does not properly consider the historic and landscape characteristics of Dirleton.

The Dirleton conservation area, unusually, has been drawn up to include the surrounding fields and countryside as well as the village. This was presumably for a reason: the fields and countryside surrounding the village are intended to be treated as part of the whole designated, protected place. They will therefore also be subject to the same strict conservation protection measures which apply to the village.

It seems to us that either architects and planning consultants are not analysing the conservation area properly prior to starting their designs and development proposals or developers are instructing their designers to provide what they want commercially without any regard to the visual impact and the harm they might inflict on the historic, architectural and landscape value of the place.

**The DVA has the following objections to this proposed development which are summarised below:**

1 The development proposals would have an adverse impact on the Conservation Area and the setting of Dirleton kirk- a listed building. The development conflicts with the Conservation Area Character Statement for Dirleton.

The architectural character of the proposal is industrial in character and characteristic of a low quality, urban fringe location.

At dusk and at night the glow from the floodlighting will be seen from all around the countryside north of the proposed site, including from the two core footpaths and from Ware Road.

The daytime impact of the floodlights needs to consider the visual impact of the 8 metre high columns and the floodlight units as structures seen within the countryside and heritage landscape. Such structures are alien to a rural conservation village like Dirleton and entirely out of character with the setting of the village and its protected undeveloped fields to the north.

The stable building is large in scale (approximately 30 metres x 12 metres) and is to be constructed of steel sheeting with wooden doors. It has security shutters. The size and the extensive use of metal and security elements contribute to the general industrial appearance of the proposal.

2 The proposal does not comply with the Local Development Plan with regard to the Countryside Around Towns policy for Dirleton which spells out clearly a requirement for the fields north of the village to remain undeveloped.

3 Intended Use: Access and Traffic. The stated use is for ‘the keeping of horses’. The scale of the development would suggest a commercial horse-riding and livery business. The unsurfaced access lane running from the northern extremity of the present tarmacked section of Manse Road to the entrance to the application site is unsuitable for regular use by large horse vans and trailers. We do not know the ownership of the *solum* of this section of the lane but we have been advised that the cost of its upkeep is shared amongst the proprietors of the houses to which it gives access, in terms of their titles.

4 Intended Use: Connecting Public Footpaths. The linking footpath network is not surfaced and is not capable of taking any significant increase in horse-riding numbers. The adjacent public footpaths- the John Muir Way and core path 91 from Kirk Wood to Yellowcraig, already get churned up and muddy in winter over long sections. They cannot take any significant increase in horse-riding without becoming mucky during wet periods.

5 Environmental Health Issues: it would be unusual to locate a stables of this size close to residential properties. Stables are a nuisance neighbour and an anti-social use attracting vermin and producing horse muck and effluent, noise and smells. For that reason they are best located on farms away from homes and pets.

6 The proposed development does not meet the relevant Scottish Planning Policy principles in favour of sustainable development. (Floodlights and energy conservation)

7 There is no consideration of the impact of the 8 metre high floodlights on nocturnal wildlife, particularly on protected owl and bat species.

**For the full DVA response see the Mailchimp circular to all DVA members.**