

Lime Down
Statement Emma Tomlinson
Interested Party Reference number: [REDACTED]

1. Experience and local practice

I am an [REDACTED], 27 years qualified from Cambridge University vet school [REDACTED]. I have practiced locally all my career and am a business owner of Tomlinson Equine Limited (ambulatory performance horse and referral reproduction practice) and Tomlinson Equine Stud established in 2002. Tomlinson Equine Ltd treats a range of performance horses including hunting horses, polo ponies, dressage horses, event horses, show jumpers, and thoroughbred racehorses. Our veterinary team travels to our clients' premises across the surrounding area to provide first-opinion, referral and performance equine care, including routine and emergency work. Clients also travel to our premises to make use of the stud veterinary services. Having lived and worked in this area for the best part of my life I am very familiar with local roads and the equine community around the proposed scheme.

2. Veterinary access

Myself and other vets in the practice use the roads around the proposed Lime Down scheme to reach clients, in both emergency and routine situations. Delays on the roads in our area can affect my business and the businesses of my clients, even with routine appointments. Furthermore, delays affecting emergency call-outs can be extremely detrimental, not only to my practice's ability to provide veterinary care for the animal owner, but also to the welfare of the animal itself, sometimes making the difference between life and death. Examples include colic and foaling, which are both extremely time-sensitive.

3. Treating horses around disturbance

I understand that the proposed Lime Down project will involve significant disturbance around the affected area. It is well known in the veterinary industry that unexpected activity and increased noise cause stress in horses, resulting in them being more difficult to examine and treat, and resulting in sedation, including higher than standard doses of sedation becoming necessary. This can result in a sub-optimal clinical examination or treatment. Where possible, activities producing increased noise or unexpected disturbance should be stopped during a clinical examination or treatment if they are affecting the horse. Most veterinary work is carried out in close contact with the horse, often while it is sedated but still conscious; a sudden fright can cause the horse to react violently, putting the vet and other staff at serious risk of injury.

4. The Applicant's proposed mitigation

Whilst advance notice of construction may help with some routine work, if the applicant is willing to periodically cease activities that are negatively affecting the vet's ability to work, in unplanned emergency work, for example injuries, foaling and colics, this mitigation will not help at all.

5. Your embryo/reproductive work

The lime down proposed project associated excess noise and heavy traffic will negatively affect the stallions, young animals and pregnant mares we have on site, which could easily lead to reduced pregnancy success rates, unexpected foaling patterns due to disturbance and reduced stallion performance which in turn hugely negatively affects our business as well as the clients' desire to use our businesses. It also increases the risk that the horses will react to this noise and behave in a dangerous unpredictable way that is dangerous for our staff and the animals themselves (especially in the case of fragile young foals). In my clinical experience, a horse that appears outwardly calm or habituated isn't necessarily always sufficiently settled for safe veterinary examination.

6. The hearing evidence

From my experience in equine practice, horses can certainly become accustomed to familiar and repeated stimuli, but I would be cautious about assuming that habituation means an individual horse will not react to new, sudden, continued or unpredictable disturbance. Horses vary considerably in temperament and response, and in clinical practice we deal with individual animals rather than an 'average' horse.

I would also be cautious about relying upon a fixed distance such as 30 metres as an indication that a horse will not react to disturbance further away from this. In my clinical experience, the distance at which a horse responds to noise, machinery, movement or other activity will depend upon the individual horse and the nature and suddenness of the stimulus. I would not use a handling flight-zone distance clinically to predict whether a horse will respond to external noise, machinery or disturbance.

Young or inexperienced horses can learn and become accustomed to new experiences, but they can also be highly unpredictable in their response to something unfamiliar or unsettling them.

From a veterinary perspective, disturbance can also be important during examination and treatment. It is not unusual in equine practice for me to ask for a tractor, machinery or other nearby activity to be stopped because a horse is becoming unsettled, or because I consider it necessary for the safety of the horse, handler or veterinary surgeon. This can be particularly important where a procedure requires the horse to remain still, or where the horse is already stressed, painful or unwell.

For those reasons, I would not personally assume that advance warning, habituation or a generic stand-off distance of 30m would in every case be sufficient to manage the practical veterinary consequences of construction activity. In my clinical experience, a horse that appears outwardly calm or habituated is not necessarily settled enough for safe veterinary examination. The appropriate response would depend on the individual horse, the clinical situation and the nature of the disturbance.