

Bath & North East Somerset Full Council Meeting November 8, 2012
Three-minute presentation by HorseWorld's managing director Mark Owen

Thank you Chair and Councillors for allowing me to speak this evening.

I'm Mark Owen, managing director of Whitchurch-based charity HorseWorld.

Some of you may know us. For those who don't, HorseWorld is one of the UK's leading horse rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming charity.

We've been helping abandoned, neglected and ill-treated horses - from our Whitchurch farm - since 1952...we are currently celebrating our 60th anniversary.

The charity has grown continually [last year saw a threefold increase in horses rescued] and is now a major local employer with 62 staff and 140 volunteers.

We are also the fourth most-visited, paid-for tourist attraction in Bath & North-East Somerset, with more than 100,000 visitors a year. We have a dedicated visitor centre housed in a number of old, mainly listed farm-buildings.

As well as caring for horses, we also work with people:

- We teach pupils from local schools and colleges – including Writhlington School and Norton Radstock College
- We've helped hundreds of local young people – many vulnerable and disadvantaged – develop vital life-skills and build self-esteem through our highly-praised educational courses
- We also train emergency services to handle animals.

I would be delighted to personally show any of you around HorseWorld.

HorseWorld – the leading UK Horse rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming charity



But onto the reason I am here.

Like most UK charities, we've seen our main sources of funding [legacies and donations] sharply decline over recent years. Our current financial situation has deteriorated dramatically.

But I'm not here to ask for money.

The only way we can ensure a future for HorseWorld is to increase the number of visitors and the amount they spend...all other avenues have been fully explored and discounted.

We've done extremely well. Through hard work we have successfully increased visitor numbers substantially, year-on-year. It is clear we can increase visitor numbers further...to the 134,000 needed to secure our financial future.

But there's a problem. The existing visitor centre, with its listed buildings and limited indoor facilities, has already exceeded capacity. It is simply no longer fit-for-purpose. This summer we turned visitors away.

So we are proposing to build a brand new visitor centre...still on our land at Whitchurch, but on part of the site where visitors will be able to get much closer to the heart of our work. Seeing it 'up-close' is far more likely to compel visitors to become longer-term supporters.

The new visitor centre would sit alongside our existing animal welfare facilities, and would include a covered equestrian training area, museum and classrooms. The early-stage designs – by Bath-based architects Stubbs Rich – are really exciting.

It would, of course, require planning permission. To fund the construction of the new centre, we would also need permission for an 'enabling' development of an anticipated 80 to 90 new homes on our existing site, including converting the listed buildings.

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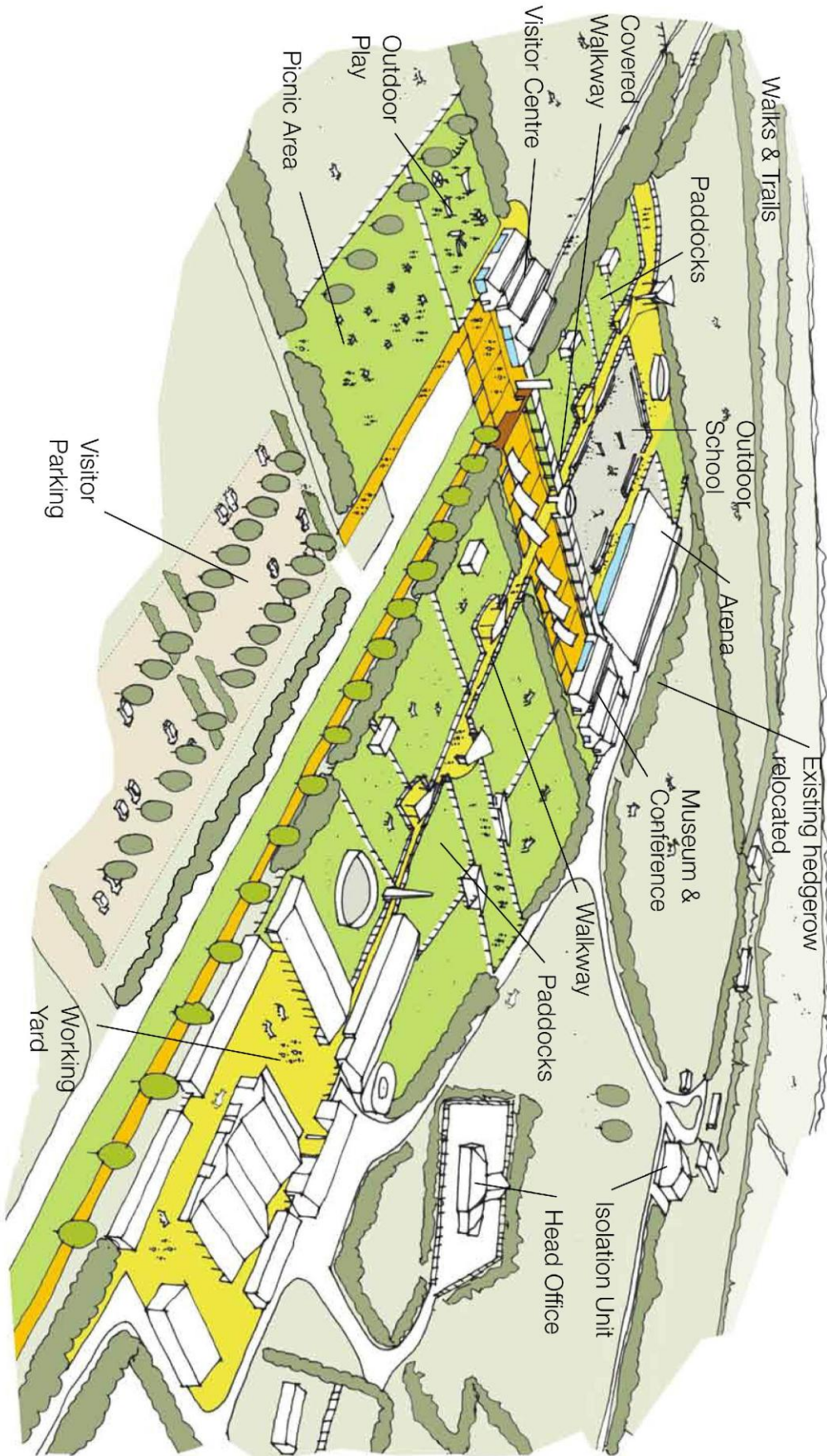
If we do make a planning application, we will consult extensively with the local community. HorseWorld is very much part of Whitchurch...and we want the community to help shape our plans.

I wanted to ensure you were all aware of the amazing work HorseWorld does. And I ask you to support any carefully-considered plans we submit, to ensure we can continue that work for the next 60 years.

Thank you for listening.

530 words

HorseWorld
Proposed Masterplan



HorseWorld – the leading UK Horse rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming charity



HorseWorld
Proposed Visitor Centre

