

# PLANNING STATEMENT

Heath Farm, Park Lane, Ashington, RH20 3AN

Planning Statement, relating to a full application for

*Erection of detached outbuilding for use as a sauna*

Our ref: 25/002

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 I am instructed by the applicant, to submit this application for the erection of a detached outbuilding to provide a sauna for guests of the glamping pods.

1.2 Permission was previously granted on the 3rd September 2021 under the auspices of DC/21/1592 for the *change of use of agricultural land for the siting of 3 No. glamping pod holiday lets.*

1.3 This application has been implemented and one such pod exists on site; this is in the form of an A-Frame cabin, providing specialist accommodation for tourism within the district.

1.4 The applicant now wishes to enhance the offering for Guests by way of installing a detached outbuilding which would provide a sauna for guests staying on site. The sauna is designed to reflect the existing pod being similarly of an 'A-Frame' form.

1.5 The proposed development would deliver a number of benefits most notably through the enhancement of existing visitor accommodation which in turn would assist in attracting visitors to the district. This provision would be in keeping with the ethos of the visitor accommodation aimed at those wishing for an off-grid stay from which to explore the outdoors, something particularly pertinent given the close proximity to the National Park.

1.6 As will be explored in detail below, it is our contention the sauna would not increase the level of activity on site that there would be a need to revisit the use of the land; its size would not be of such significance to impact on neighbours either and it would be in keeping with the character of the area.

**STRUCTURE OF THIS STATEMENT**

1.7 The purpose of this statement is to set out why it is contended that the application to install the sauna should be allowed and planning permission be granted. It will assess in greater detail the proposal against relevant national and local planning policies and other material considerations.


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1.12 This statement will include sections relating to the site and its context, the planning history, the proposal, planning policy, planning considerations, water neutrality and a conclusion.


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## 2.0 SITE AND CONTEXT

2.1 The land which the applicant has control over extends to some 5.14ha of agricultural land. The application site relates to a much smaller area within the holding being the proposed location of the sauna

2.2 The area is rural in character consisting of agricultural land, woodlands. There are a few residential properties within the area but these are well distanced from the site – the closest being approximately 360 meters away.

2.3 Whilst permission was granted for three pods only one is on site currently. The pod takes the form of an A-frame cabin providing holiday accommodation.

2.4 The application seeks to erect the sauna in close proximity to this building reflecting its form and appearance as an A-Frame. Similar festoon lights to those consented also inspire the form of the sauna.

2.5 The site is accessed from Park Lane which is a D class road. There is an area of hardstanding for parking a short distance from the access point.




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## 3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 The table below shows the relevant planning history for the site:

| Reference; | Title; | Decision; |
|---|---|---|
| DC/24/0815 | Prior notification for the use of existing barn for the storage of equipment used for agriculture and for use as a winery. | Prior Approval Not Required 24/06/24 |
| DC/23/1611 | Variation of Condition 6 of previously approved application DC/21/1592 (Change of use of agricultural land for the siting of 3 No. glamping pod holiday lets) Variation sought for the retention of fairy lights installed beneath the main roof structure of the existing pod. | Approved 04/12/2023 |
| DC/21/1592 | Change of use of agricultural land for the siting of 3 No. glamping pod holiday lets. | Approved 03/09/2021 |

3.2 The application granted in 2021 approved the use of the land for the siting of 3 glamping pods as part of a scheme of agricultural diversification. One of the pods has been erected on site in the form of an A-Frame cabin.

3.3 The proposed development would be in support of this permission providing an additional offering for guests enhancing their stay whilst making the offering more attractive delivering benefits to the wider district through those benefits associated with tourism development.


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# 4.0 PROPOSAL INCLUDING DESIGN AND ACCESS PRINCIPLES

4.1 The development subject of this application proposes the erection of an outbuilding to provide a sauna for use by guests staying on the site.

**Use**

4.2 The proposed development would not change the use of the land with this considered in full as part of the previous application on site. The proposed sauna would be erected in support of this use.

Layout

4.3 The proposed sauna would be located adjacent to the glamping pod that has been erected on site; positioned towards the southeast of the existing A-frame.

4.4 Internally the sauna would be of a modest form appropriate for use as a sauna.

Amount

4.5 The proposal is for the erection of a single building to be used as a sauna. The building would a have a limited footprint of 25sqm.

Scale

4.6 The proposed building is inspired by the form of the A-Frame Cabin. To this extent it would similarly take a 'triangular' form with low eaves height and a total height of 3.91m.

Appearance

4.7 As set out the proposed sauna would take a form similar to that of the A-Frame Cabin; this is to say that it would take a similar form but albeit being a smaller version. This is shown in the image below.


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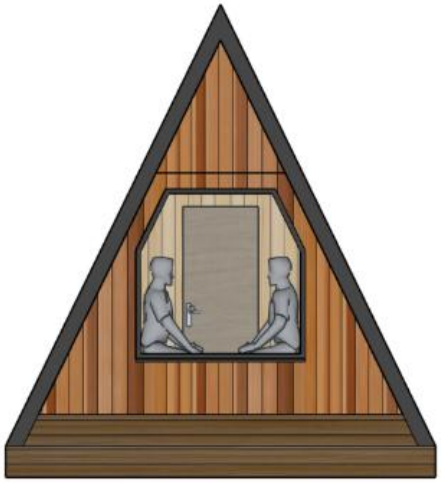

Landscaping

4.8 The proposed development would not alter the wider landscaping of the site with the form of the land remaining unchanged.

Access

4.9 There would be no changes to the existing access on site. The building would not result in any increases to the level of highway activity that would necessitate any changes. The parking area would remain unchanged with the track providing access to the pod and the proposed sauna.




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# 5.0 PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE BACKGROUND

5.1 For the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning applications are required to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 The approved Development Plan for this site therefore comprises the policies of the Horsham District Planning Framework 2015.

5.3 A new plan has recently been submitted for examination; initial hearing sessions were held in 2024. Progress on the plan has, however, be suspended following concerns raised by the Inspector who recommended the withdrawal of the plan. Whilst the plan has not yet been formally withdrawn, given the extensive concerns that remain unresolved it is considered that the policies of the new plan should be afforded no weight at this time. This is consistent with the guidance contained within *Shaping Development in Horsham District Planning Advice Note* published earlier this year.

Planning policy constraints

5.4 The appeal site is subject to the following relevant planning constraints:

- Countryside Location

Central Government Planning Policy Guidance

5.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was first introduced in March 2012 and replaced planning policy statements (PPSs) and planning policy guidance notes (PPGs). The NPPF sets out national planning policy to be taken into account by Councils when preparing new local plans and when taking decisions on planning applications.

5.6 The NPPF has been recently updated with a revised version being published in 2024. There continues to be a strong presumption in favour of sustainable development and at paragraph 3 it advises the Framework should be read as a whole.


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5.7 Paragraph 7 states the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 states achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives (economic, social and environmental), which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives). However, paragraph 9 states these are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged. Decisions should also take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.

5.8 Paragraph 12 states the following: '*The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan…permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed*.'

5.9 The most relevant sections of the NPPF in relation to this proposal are 6 (Building a strong competitive economy) and 12 (Achieving well designed places).

5.10 Section 6 relates to building a strong, competitive economy including supporting sustainable economic growth and proactively meeting the development needs of business. The approach taken should address the challenges of the future, ultimately capitalising on Britain's performance and potential. It sets out support for supporting the rural economy including support for agricultural diversification. This was supported in the original application. The proposed development would make an enhancement to this and the wider tourism offering. It is well established that tourism can bring additional economic benefits particularly to rural areas and such an enhancement would be of direct benefit in this regard.

5.11 Section 12 deals with the requirement for good design, which it notes is a key aspect of sustainable development. The proposed sauna has been specifically designed to reflect the


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character of the existing pod which has been found to be acceptable to the character of the area.

Local Development Plan

5.12 The following policies of the Local Plan are considered to apply to this application

- Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
- Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development
- Policy 11 - Tourism and Cultural Facilities
- Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
- Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
- Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
- Policy 33 - Development Principles
- Policy 35 - Strategic Policy: Climate Change
- Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
- Policy 41 - Parking
- Policy 43 - Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

5.13 The Ashington Neighbourhood Plan is also relevant to the application with the relevant policies considered to be:

- ASH1 – Overall Strategy
- ASH5 – landscape and countryside access

5.14 The following documents are considered to provide guidance relevant to the proposal:

- National Planning Policy Framework
- National Planning Policy Guidance


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## 6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The application proposes the installation of a small outbuilding to provide a sauna for the guest staying at the tourist accommodation consented on the land.

6.2 Having regard to the planning history and the constraints on the land we consider the key considerations to be as follows:

- Principle and location of development
- Tourism and the Rural Economy
- Design and Impact on the Character of the Area
- Impact on Neighbouring Amenity
- Highways Impacts
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- Other Matters

These will be addressed in turn under the relevant headers below.

Principle of Development

6.3 The application made would be ancillary to the previous grant of permission which consented the farm diversification on the land to provide tourist accommodation.

6.4 The proposed development would provide an additional provision for such tourist accommodation; this in turn will increase the attractiveness of the offering. The benefits of visiting tourists to the rural economy is well established, with tourist bringing significant benefits in terms of spending and footfall to the area.


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6.5 Whilst the intention of the sauna is to improve the attractiveness of the offering it would not directly lead to any materially different impacts in terms of the sustainability of the location beyond that previously assessed by the Council in the consideration of DC/21/1592. We highlight at this juncture that such application granted consent for three pods whilst at this time only one is on site.

6.6 To this extent we contend that the principle of the use and the suitability of the location has already been consented and the proposed outbuilding would not alter such conclusions on the matter. Accordingly, the key considerations are as to the impact of the proposal on the area and its amenity as opposed to the location or any other matter. These are addressed below.

Tourism and the Rural Economy

6.7 Policy 11 of the development plan states:

*Measures which promote tourism and enhance local cultural facilities, including recreation based rural diversification, will be encouraged. Any development should be of a scale and type appropriate to the location and should increase the range, or improve the quality of accommodation, attraction or experiences for tourists, day visitors, business visitors, and residents in the District. Support will particularly be given to proposals which:*

*1. Reinforce the local distinctiveness and improve existing facilities;*
*2. Focuses major tourism and cultural facilities in Horsham town centre;*
*3. Seek to ensure that facilities are available within the towns and villages in the district and are in keeping with their relationship with the urban area and countryside around them especially in and around the High Weald AONB and the South Downs National Park;*


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*4. Develop the opportunities associated with rural diversification and rural development initiatives, particularly where they assist farm diversification projects, benefit the local economy, or enable the retention of buildings contributing to the character of the countryside; and*

*5. Do not result in the loss of a cultural resource.*

6.6 It is clear that the policy provides support for improving the quality of accommodation not just support for new. As is set out above the proposal is intended to provide an enhancement to the existing offering through providing an additional amenity to guest. The proposed sauna would provide an additional provision which enhances the ethos of the tourism offering. The current offering is intended to provide accommodation for occupiers who wish to detach from the modern world and explore the outdoors. The provision of a sauna directly contributes towards this providing a wellness facility for guests to unwind in and further detach from modern technology etc.

6.7 The supporting text for Policy 11 clearly sets out the benefits of tourist accommodation within the district noting that there is a shortage of overnight accommodation meaning that many visitors are only there for a day. Through providing an additional benefit the proposal would assist in meeting the objective set out within the plan to attract more longer-term visitors. As set out above there is a clear established link between visitor accommodation and benefits to the rural economy through the additional spending that entails. To this extent it is highlighted that the site is well located in terms of access to the National Park, local towns/villages and a range of amenities for which people would visit the area for.

6.8 In light of the above as an enhancement to an existing tourist provision that the scheme would directly accord with Policy 11 and the intended public benefits that such would deliver. We consider this weights in favour of the proposal.


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Design and Impact on the Character of the Area

6.9 Section 12 of the NPPF makes it clear that good design is a key component of sustainable development going directly to its heart.

6.10 Policy 25 of the HDPF promotes development that protects, conserves and enhances the landscape character from inappropriate development. Proposal should take into account landscape characteristics, with development seeking to provide an attractive, functional and accessible environment that complements local character.

6.11 Policies 32 and 33 expand on this and state that development must be of the highest quality with specific focus towards:

1. *Providing an attractive, functional, accessible, safe and adaptable environment;*
2. *Complement locally distinctive characters and heritage of the district;*
3. *Contribute a sense of place both in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings and the historic landscape in which they sit;*
4. *Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development and contribute to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses; and*
5. *Help secure a framework of high-quality open spaces which meets the identified needs of the community.*

6.12 Policy 33 continues to set out 11 design principles. These are summarised as being in relation to the following points:

1. Making effective use of the land


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2. Ensuring development does not result in unacceptable harm to the amenity of nearby properties and land
3. Ensuring that the scale, massing and appearance of development is of a high standard of design and layout
4. Ensure that design is locally distinctive and takes into account relevant design statements
5. Uses high standard of building materials
6. Seeks to retain existing important landscape and natural features
7. Ensures buildings are orientated to gain maximum benefits from sunlight
8. Incorporate safe and visually attractive areas for parking, cycles and refuse
9. Reduce any actual or perceived opportunities for crime
10. Contribute to the removal of physical barriers; and
11. Make a clear distinction between public and private spaces

6.13 The proposed development constitutes a very modest building that would be well screened from public vantage points. The building is specifically designed to reflect the existing tourist accommodation and follows the A-Frame form as is implemented on site. To this extent the building is designed to be a smaller A-Frame building being significantly smaller and subservient to the tourist accommodation as constructed. This again fits the ethos of the offering and would help assimilate the proposed development with the existing character of the area.

6.14 The building would make use of appropriate materials, again which reflect the existing accommodation and incorporates timber cladding and appropriate roofing materials all of which are present on site. This again would assist with ensuring that the development positively responds to the character of the area.

6.15 Further we contend that given its limited height, scale and massing, it would not result in any adverse impacts on the wider landscape character of the site being largely screened and hidden from public vantage points.

6.16 Having regard to the above it is contended that the proposed development would accord with the policies of the development plan in this regard and would be of appropriate design and form to the character and amenity of the area and landscape.

Impact on neighbouring properties

6.17 A vital consideration of whether a proposal constitutes a high-quality development is ensuring that it does not adversely impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

6.18 Policy 33 of the HDPF (2015) states that development should consider the scale, massing and orientation between buildings, respecting the amenities and sensitivities of neighbouring properties.

6.19 The existing development on site is well separated from neighbouring properties with significant buffers and distances between the built form on site and the nearest boundaries. As set out clearly above the use of the land in terms of provision for tourist accommodation has already been considered and granted relevant permissions. In considering the proposal at such time it was not considered that such a use would result in any harm to the amenity of neighbouring properties.

6.20 The proposed building would be of very limited and modest form. This in combination with the significant distances to boundaries would ensure that it did not result in harm to the amenity of neighbouring properties by reason of loss of privacy, loss of light, overbearing impact etc.


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6.21 As set out the use of the land has already been considered. The sauna although providing additional benefits and improving he offering of the tourist accommodation would not likely result in a material increase in the activity on site. Accordingly, given the use of the site has already been considered we do not consider that the proposal would adversely impact on neighbours.

6.22 Having regard to the above it is contended that the proposal fully accords with the policies of the plan in this regard.

Highways Impacts

6.23 Policy 40 of the HDPF states:

*There is commitment to developing an integrated community connected by a sustainable transport system. In order to manage the anticipated growth in demand for travel, development proposals which promote an improved and integrated transport network, with a re-balancing in favour of non-car modes as a means of access to jobs, homes, services and facilities, will be encouraged and supported. Development will be supported if it:*

1. *Is appropriate and in scale to the existing transport infrastructure, including public transport.*
2. *Maintains and improves the existing transport system (road, rail, cycle).*
3. *Is integrated with the wider network of routes, including public rights of way and cycle paths*
4. *Includes opportunities for sustainable transport which reduce the need for major infrastructure and cut carbon emissions.*
5. *Is located in areas where there are, or will be a choice in the modes of transport available.*


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6. *Minimises the distance people need to travel and minimises conflicts between traffic, cyclists and pedestrians.*

7. *Delivers better local bus and rail services in partnership with operators and increasing opportunities for interchange between the public transport network and all other modes of transport.*

8. *Develops innovative and adaptable approaches to public transport in the rural areas of the district.*

9. *Provides safe and suitable access for all vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, horses riders, public transport and the delivery of goods.*

10. *Is accompanied by an agreed Green Travel Plan where it is necessary to minimise a potentially significant impact of the development on the wider area or as a result of needing to address an existing local traffic problem*

6.24 The NPPF advises that development should only be refused on highways grounds if there would be *an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.*

6.25 The proposed development would not alter the existing access arrangements and as set out above would not result in any changes to the activity or degree of use on site. Having regard to the above it is contended that the proposal would not result in any adverse impact on the highway either by way of safety or capacity.

Biodiversity Net Gain

6.26 The proposed development would have a footprint of less than 25sqm. We contend that this would comply with the *de minimis* exemption and therefore there would be no requirement to demonstrate Biodiversity Net Gain.

6.27 We further highlight to this extent that given the extremely limited size of the proposal there would not be any justification for any further ecological surveys. This is particularly the case given that it would be positioned on otherwise mown grassland.

Other Matters

6.28 It is noted that Natural England have withdrawn the position statement relating to water neutrality. Therefore, there is no requirement to demonstrate that the use would be water neutral. Notwithstanding this it is highlighted that the sauna can be delivered without the need for any water connection. Further, the provision would be akin to an outbuilding of a residential property and therefore would not likely result in any additional water need on site in any regard.

6.29 In terms of energy efficiency the existing tourist accommodation is equipped with a range of renewable energy sources notable the Solar PVs. These existing provisions would provide enough energy for the needs of the sauna for which it could be directly attached. The proposed development could therefore be carried out in a sustainable matter reliant on existing renewable infrastructure within the site.

# 7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The proposal is a straightforward proposal for the erection of an outbuilding to provide a sauna as an ancillary provision to the existing tourist accommodation.

7.2 The proposed development, in line with policy 11, would result in an enhancement to the existing provision and should therefore be supported in this regard.

7.3 We consider the form of the building to be wholly appropriate to the character of the area and the landscape reflecting the tourist accommodation that it would serve.

7.4 The proposal would not result in harms to the amenity of the area nor to the function or capacity of the highway, both by reason of the fact that the proposal would not result in a material increase to the degree of activity on site.

7.5 For the reasons set out above we request that the application be grated without delay. We trust we have provided you with sufficient information but if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.


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