

Planning/Design and Access Statement

**Use of Land for the Siting of 3 no. Glamping Pods
for Tourist Accommodation**

**Land at Stonepits Manor
Marringdean Road
Billingshurst**

**Submission on behalf of Mr L Sheward and
Mrs AM Clarke Sheward**

November 2025



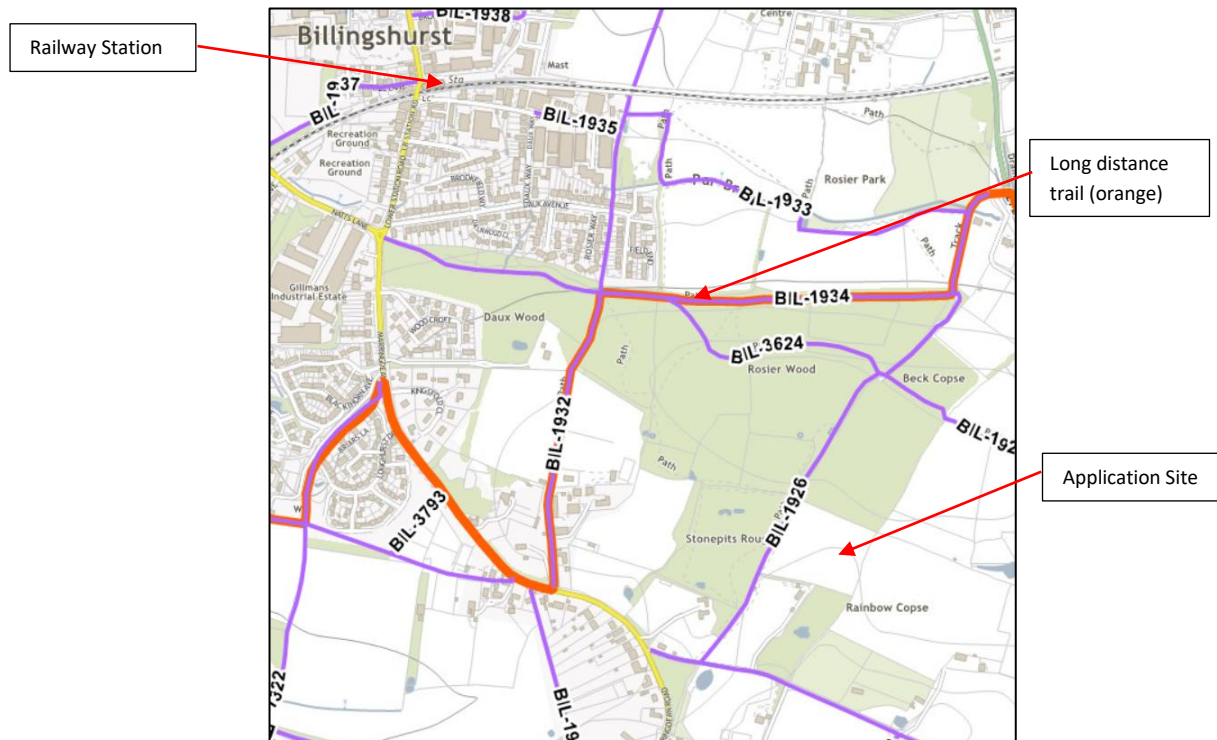
1. Introduction

- 1.1 Henry Adams LLP has been instructed by Mr L Sheward and Mrs AM Clarke Sheward to apply for planning permission for the use of land at his property Stonepits Manor, Marringdean Road, Billingham for the siting of 3 no. glamping pods for use for holiday accommodation.
- 1.2 This statement describes the site and its surroundings, the application proposal, the planning policies applicable to the proposed use and goes on to demonstrate that the proposal is policy compliant and as such planning permission should be granted.
- 1.3 The application is accompanied by the following documents and drawings:
- Application form
 - Requisite Plans
 - Location Plan
 - Block Plan
 - Floor Plans/Elevations
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
 - Biodiversity Impact Calculation Report
 - Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool

2. Description of Site and Policy Constraints

- 2.1 The application site is located on applicants' holding which comprises around 12ha of land made up of woodland and open pastures. The dwelling, known as Stonepits Manor, is situated on the south-western part of the holding and is served by its own access off Marringdean Road. To the south of the residential access point is a second access that extends eastwards from Marringdean Road serving the applicants' land and several other residential properties. The first 275m of this private lane is under the control of the applicants.
- 2.2 The proposed site is located within the north-eastern parcel of the holding which is surrounded by woodland to the north and west and mature hedgerows to the east and south. A portal framed building and area of hardstanding is located on the land to the south of the application site served by an informal track which it links to a field gate onto the private lane.
- 2.3 The private lane is also a public footpath (BIL1927) that extends south eastward to West Chilton Lane. Footpath BIL1932 extends northwards from the private lane through the centre of the holding linking with Footpath 3624 that takes users to the edge of Billingham. The section of Marringdean Road that serves the private lane has a pavement on its

southern side extending westwards towards the village for approximately 370m. Footpath no. 1932 extends northwards from this paved section, which also part of the long distance Sussex Diamond Way trail and also links to the edge of Billingshurst to the north. An extract of the footpath map is shown below.



- 2.4 In planning policy terms, the site lies outside the built-up area of Billingshurst, but the access point is only approximately 500m to the south-east. Rosier Wood and Daux Wood to the north is Ancient Woodland but is approximately 250m at its closest point. This and the woodland on the western side of the applicants' holding is covered by a Tree Preservation Order. The land is located in Flood Zone 1.

3. **Proposal**

- 3.1 The application seeks permission to site three no. glamping pods on the land to the north-east of Stonepits Manor. Each pod will be a timber triangular structure with the pitched roof extending from the ridge to ground level. The roof will be clad in aluminium sheeting with an inset glazed elevation on the southern side and a part glazed, part timber clad elevation on the north side. Solar panels will be installed on one roof plane.
- 3.2 The accommodation will comprise a living/kitchen/dining room, bedroom and shower room at ground floor level with a mezzanine providing a first-floor bedroom. The external

envelope of the building including roof overhang will measure 6.5m x 8.25m. The overall base of the structure, which will extend beyond the envelope of the structure to provide a 3m deep terrace, will measure 6.5m x 11.25m.

- 3.3 The bases will be supported on metal jacks that will just screw into the ground and there will not be any permanent foundation.
- 3.4 The proposed pods will be 'off grid' with no mains water or electricity supply. The toilets will be composting toilets, and the taps and showers will be fed from water tanks that will be filled by the applicants and/or rainwater harvesting. Solar panels will be installed on the one roof plane to provide power. Drinking water will be supplied in the form of bottled water.
- 3.5 Access to the site will be from Marringdean Road along the private lane in the applicants' ownership and then turning north along a track serving the building in the field to the south of the application site. Parking will be available on the existing hardstanding adjacent to the barn and guests will proceed to the pods on foot.

4. Planning Policy Context

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development which comprises three overarching objectives; economic, social and environmental. It states that the three objectives 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).
- 4.2 In paragraph 88 it states, planning policies and decisions should enable, amongst other matters, sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.
- 4.3 Section 9 deals with sustainable transport and seeks to ensure that sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location as well as ensuring safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users. Paragraph 116 states that 'Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.'
- 4.4 Section 15 deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment and states that decisions should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the

wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services as well as providing net gains for biodiversity.

- 4.5 The Development Plan comprises the Horsham District Planning Framework 2015 (HDPF) and the Billingshurst Neighbourhood Plan. The following Local Plan policies are relevant to the determination this application:

Policy 1 – Sustainable Development

Policy 7 – Economic Growth

Policy 10 – Rural Economic Development

Policy 11 – Tourism and Cultural Facilities

Policy 25 – The Natural Environment and Landscape Character

Policy 26 – Countryside Protection

Policy 31 – Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

Policy 33 – Development Principles

Policy 40 – Sustainable Transport

Policy 43 – Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

- 4.6 The following Neighbourhood Plan policies are relevant:

BILL 1 – Built- up Area Boundary

BILL 11 – Tourism-Related Development and Provision of Tourist Accommodation

5. Planning Considerations

Principle

- 5.1 Policy 7 of the HDPF seeks to achieve sustainable economic growth for Horsham District to 2031. Criterion 6 of the policy states that this will be achieved by 'promotion of the District as an attractive place to stay and visit to increase the value of the tourism economy'.
- 5.2 Policy 10 of the HDPF more specifically encourages sustainable rural economic development to generate local employment opportunities and economic, social and environmental benefits for local communities. It states that any development should be appropriate to the countryside location, and in the case of countryside-based enterprises and activities must contribute to the wider rural economy and/or promote recreation and the enjoyment of the countryside. In doing so, development should either:
- a. Be contained wherever possible within existing converted buildings, and/or within existing boundaries of the site, or;
 - b. Result in substantial environmental improvement and reduce the impact on the countryside where new or replacement buildings are involved.

- 5.3 Policy 11 of the HDPF seeks to encourage measures which promote and enhance local cultural facilities. Any development should be of a scale and type appropriate to its location, and should increase the range, or improve the quality of accommodation, attraction of experiences for tourists, day visitors, business visitors, and residents in the District. Criterion 4 of the policy states that support will be given to proposals which develop the opportunities associated with rural diversification and rural development initiatives, where they benefit the local economy.
- 5.4 The site is located in the countryside where Policy 26 of the Local Plan seeks to protect its rural character and undeveloped nature. The policy does however allow for certain uses where they need a countryside location and meet one of the specified criteria, one of which is quiet informal recreational use. The policy goes on to require any proposal to be of a scale appropriate to its countryside location and states that development will be considered acceptable where it does not lead to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside.
- 5.5 The Horsham District Hotel and Visitor Accommodation Study July 2016 shows good potential for tourist accommodation development in the District due to various factors including being well placed to capitalise on the projected growth in the domestic short break and overseas tourist markets, the increasing demand for family and friend get togethers, celebrations and weekends away , the projected population growth that will drive growth in wedding businesses and visits to friends and relatives and the potential to capitalise on many of the current trends in tourist accommodation development in the UK.
- 5.6 The report goes on to show the potential development opportunities in the rural parts of the District which includes camping pod developments and glamping sites. It recommends some flexibility towards developing visitor accommodation in the countryside in terms of an element of new-build accommodation development, with more clarity about the circumstances under which this could be considered.
- 5.7 It is therefore submitted that there is Policy support for visitor accommodation in the rural parts of the District as it is acknowledged that there are significant economic benefits which arise from the tourism economy. New structures are permitted under Policy 10, especially, as in this case, the development will promote recreation in and enjoyment of the countryside.
- 5.8 The relevant policies do however require consideration of the visual impact of any development on the character of the countryside and of an appropriate scale so as not to lead to a significant increase in activity. These matters will be considered below.

Character and Appearance

- 5.9 The application site is located in the countryside, but it is not the subject of any particular landscape designation. The boundaries of the field in which the pods are to be located are very mature restricting any long-distance views and as such the development would not impact on landscape character.
- 5.10 The pods will be visible from the public footpath to the west (which is over 100m away), however each pod is only 6.5m wide and an overall height of 6.5m with limited bulk due to the triangular shape. There will therefore be some impact on the visual amenity of users of the footpath by the introduction of the pods however this will not be significant given the limited scale and backdrop of the mature field boundary. Having regard to the policy support for economic development in the countryside, it is considered that the benefits to local businesses that tourists will bring will outweigh the minor visual change experienced by users of the footpath.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- 5.11 The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. The key findings of the appraisal are *'Whilst the sward present is not particularly diverse, some more interesting grassland plants indicative of neutral soils were present, including meadow vetchling, hoary ragwort and common sorrel. Some negative indicators were however also present, including broad-leaved dock and common ragwort, indicating the potential for sward enhancement. The sward has the potential to support common reptiles and amphibians, though this suitability is no better than moderate given the reasonably frequent short mowing of the field.'*
- 5.12 Given that the proposal does not involve any groundworks, the report concludes that risk to amphibians and reptiles is low, and a precautionary approach is recommended. This will involve the management of the grassland prior to the development to ensure that it is kept short. In terms of enhancement, this will come with biodiversity enhancement which will create a wildflower meadow habitat of greater value. Other enhancements could include the establishment of a bee bank or a log pile which can also support invertebrates.
- 5.13 The Statutory BNG Metric also accompanies the application along with the associated Biodiversity Impact Calculation report. These illustrate that the development will result in the following:
- Loss of 0.042ha of other neutral grassland habitat.
 - Retention of 0.066ha of artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface

- Enhancement of 0.233 ha of other neutral grassland from moderate to good condition.
- Creation of 0.042ha of bare ground

5.14 As a result, the proposal will result in a net gain of 0.65 habitat units which results in a gain of 29.52% and satisfies the trading rules. The proposal therefore meets the 10% mandatory net gain requirements set out within the Environment Act 2021 and achieves enhancement to biodiversity thereby complying with Policy 31 of the Local Plan.

5.15 Policy 31 of the Local Plan also seeks to ensure any development that has the potential to impact the Arun Valley SPA is subject to a HRA to determine the need for an Appropriate Assessment. In this case, Natural England has withdrawn its Position Statement on water neutrality for the Sussex North Water Supply Zone following an agreement between Southern Water and the Environment Agency that a licence cap on water abstraction will ensure with sufficient certainty that development will not adversely impact the protected Arun Valley habitats. It is therefore submitted that this application can be determined on the basis of this new position that additional water usage will not adversely impact the SPA.

Access and Parking

5.16 Access to the site will be from Marringdean Road via a private lane and farm track to a parking area on an existing hardstanding next to the barn, south of the application site. There is sufficient space for the parking and turning of three no. vehicles, one per pod. Guests will then proceed on foot to the application site.

5.17 The junction of the private lane with the public highway, Marringdean Road lies on a stretch of road that is limited to 30mph. In considering an application for one dwelling served by this junction (DC/22/0435 and DC/24/0862) the highway authority raised no objection commenting that:

'The LHA does not anticipate that the proposed change of use would give rise to a material intensification of use of this access. An inspection of collision data provided to WSCC by Sussex Police from a period of the last five years reveals one accident approximately 135m south of this access, which has been attributed to road layout; however, the accident was not linked to the access serving the proposal site. Therefore, there is no evidence to suggest the access is operating unsafely or that the proposal would exacerbate an existing safety concern.'

5.18 Whilst this proposal is for three no. pods, each is only likely to attract one vehicle and, as they will only be for holiday use, will not be occupied full time. Furthermore, as holiday accommodation does not have the same service needs/demand for deliveries as a residential unit, it is submitted that this proposal will also not result in a material

intensification of the access. Given that the LHA has accepted that the access point is operating safely, it is anticipated that there will be no objection to this use, particularly as the speed limit on this stretch of road has been reduced to 30mph.

- 5.19 Cycle storage can be accommodated on the existing hardstanding adjacent to the parking area and can be required by the imposition of a suitably worded condition.

Sustainability

- 5.20 The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and therefore the purpose of the planning system should be to further economic, social and environmental objectives set out in the Framework. The policies of the Local Plan reflect these overarching objectives by supporting development that contributes to a sustainable economy, supports social wellbeing and protects and enhances the natural environment.
- 5.21 It is submitted that this proposal represents sustainable development that meets these objectives. It will enable a tourism use on a holding that is a size that is no longer viable for farming, providing visitor accommodation that is needed in the District and attract visitors who can enjoy the countryside and will spend locally benefitting rural businesses. The site is ideally located to attract visitors that travel by means other than by car as the site is walkable from Billingshurst Station and visitors have easy access to the public right of way network. The site will offer an off-grid experience minimising the use of natural resources and there will be benefits to biodiversity arising from the BNG proposals. Whilst there will be some impact on visual amenity arising from the new physical form, the benefits identified to the social, economic and environmental objectives outweigh any harm.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 In conclusion, the Local Plan policies recognise that visitor accommodation can be accommodated in the countryside where it will bring benefits to the rural economy and much will depend on the type of accommodation, its location and impact on the character of the area. The Visitor Accommodation Study identifies a need for glamping type accommodation which by its nature needs a rural location and will enable visitors to enjoy the countryside and engage in quiet informal recreation with its connection to public rights of way. Visitors will have a choice of transport options given the site's proximity to the settlement boundary of Billingshurst and they can make use of the facilities in the village which are accessible by walking or cycling.

- 6.2 The site provides suitable access from the public highway for those that choose to travel by car. With each pod providing only three bed spaces, the traffic movements are likely to be limited to one car per unit and given the number of other dwellings served off the same access, there is unlikely to be a material intensification of its use. Other proposed development served off the same access point has been found to acceptable with the highway authority confirming that there is no evidence to suggest the access point is operating unsafely.
- 6.3 Overall, it is concluded that the application site provides an opportunity to provide the accommodation that the District needs, whilst being located in close proximity to a settlement that provides services, facilities and alternative modes of transport for visitors. It is submitted that the proposal represents development that is sustainable economically, socially and environmentally and accords with the Development Plan and the NPPF. It is requested that planning permission is granted for the development as proposed.