

Design and Access Statement

Design and Access Statement for the addition of five timber-framed winter winter-yurt buildings and change of use of land to create a holiday accommodation business at:

Bozedown Farm, Hardwick Rd, Reading RG8 7QY



1.0 Executive Summary

This statement has been prepared in accordance with the CABE guidelines 'Design and Access Statements' 2007. It is intended to support an application for rural diversification in the form of a development proposal for the construction of 5no. Winter Yurts (Timber framed Round cabins) with integral bathrooms to provide high quality luxury 'glamping' accommodation.



Glamping is defined as luxury camping, allowing couples and families alike to connect with the outdoor space without losing the comforts of a really good hotel room. There are currently no glamping sites in the area around Pangbourne and Whitchurch-on-Thames and within 10 miles of this location. In fact, very few are within a 30 mile radius of this location. There is a site 12 miles away near Ewelme with 5 lodges: and another two arctic huts at Henley, 11 miles away. Nothing anywhere else this side of Oxford and nothing in Berkshire.

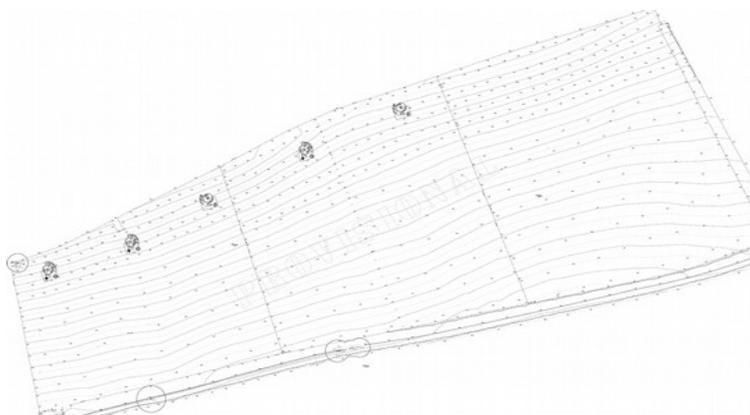
The Winter Yurts have been chosen because they accord with our objectives to maintain the environment using locally sourced products, constructed locally, heavily insulated and aesthetically pleasing.

The proposed development would extend and enhance the existing ethos of the Alpaca farm at this location by supporting our care of the environment, our place within the community of Pangbourne and Whitchurch-on-Thames most of all by allowing us to maintain the farm for generations to come.

The agricultural field site at Bozedown Farm is an ideal location on which to site low-impact Winter-Yurt style Roundhouses to sit along the hillside with a south facing aspect towards Hardwick Road and the River Thames.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 As the location plan below indicates, the application site indicated is land to the north of the main farm buildings. This site falls within The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 2.2 The site is 54023 m², 13.3 Acres, 5.4 Hectares
- 2.3 There is a public footpath running north-south along the eastern edge of the field outlined in red on page 1.
- 2.4 The land is identified as agricultural land.



3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 There are no known previous planning applications by the applicant on this site. However, a recent planning application has been submitted at Bozedown Farm (P18/S3809/FUL) on an adjacent site part-owned by the applicant for part-replacement of a section of agricultural barn for flexible use as an alpaca experience and education centre. These two applications together are to help the farm diversify and improve revenue generation overall for the farm.

4.0 THE PROPOSAL

4.1 The UK Leisure industry is one of the fastest growing industries; currently estimated to be worth over £200 billion to the UK economy and forecast to be worth £257 billion by 2025.

Oliver Smith, digital travel editor of the Telegraph writes:

“Travelodge now claims that, despite recent poor weather, holidays at home are back in demand. Its annual holiday report, which featured a survey of 3,000 adults, revealed that 65 per cent of people would be taking a summer holiday in Britain this year – up from 41 per cent last year, and 35 per cent in 2011.”

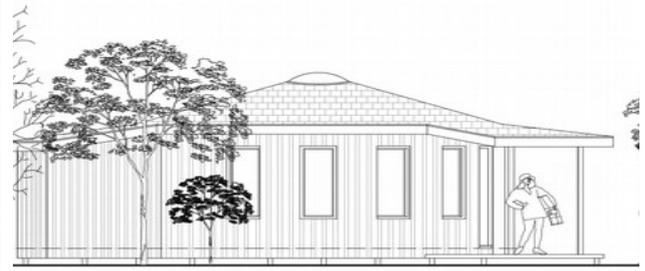
4.2 Bozedown Farm recognises that one of the core trends driving this growth and has been building momentum over the last decade in the UK is the 'glamping' movement. This has primarily been reflected in the lower end of the industry but is now an emerging trend within the 5* market with the emergence of luxury tree-houses, contemporary lodges and winter-proof winter-yurts with en-suites and hot-tubs. These provide accommodation options for visitors and guests in a different demographic and with a higher level of disposable income. Many of whom enjoy the seclusion and differentiation of the 'glamping experience' but expect to enjoy the luxury of a 5* hotel room or cottage to which they've become accustomed.

4.3 Glamping offers urban families a chance for an authentic experience of the English countryside, delivered in a manner that has low impact on the environment. There is evidence of strong and growing demand for family glamping holidays provided on a small scale in rural locations. Oxfordshire has a limited number of locations offering this particular type of luxury countryside holiday experience with the current locations achieving consistent strong bookings that indicate plenty of demand.

4.4 The winter-yurt will be designed by the British Joinery Firm '*Rotunda Roundhouses Ltd*' and built by their team of craftsmen to a very high standard. This structure will be totally unique in its own right with high quality fixtures and fittings. 100% of timber and materials are sourced from the UK. Rotunda have a strict no-import policy.

4.5 The 5 winter-yurt buildings will include one double bedroom, an en-suite shower and toilet, a fully functioning kitchen including a ceramic hob, fridge and plumbed in sink, a wood burning stove, good insulation, space for a sofa and dining table and chairs. Two of the yurts will have an adjoining bunk room to accommodate families with children. The interior will be beautifully furnished and stylishly decorated. Externally, the winter-yurt will have a dark grey composite slate roof and British Larch waney edged boards walls left untreated to blend in with the hedge line. The winter-yurt will have a porch area as the main access point & to store wellies and hang wet weather gear as well as an additional place to sit. They are to be sat on platforms with decked areas for outdoor enjoyment of the guests.

4.6 By constructing these winter-yurts, there is an opportunity to significantly increase revenue and profitability from the farmland. Livestock sales are traditionally unpredictable and this project will add an additional revenue stream in addition to live alpaca and fibre sales. This will be a year-round activity and will provide a sustained and steady income for the farm. In addition, we will be able to attract couples and families with a unique offering on this working alpaca farm in an area where glamping is not yet available in the local area.



Example of the style of the winter-yurt structure proposed.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF THE PLANNING ISSUES - PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT / SUSTAINABILITY

5.1 National Planning Policy Framework 2018

The application accords with the requirements of the National Planning Policy framework by:

- 5.11 Delivering sustainable development by making effective use of land and building to modern energy-efficient standards.
- 5.12 Supporting a prosperous rural economy – this development will allow the farm to diversify in order to provide a sustained income for the farm and allow the business to progress. Jobs will be created for cleaning the units and helping to manage bookings while the units will bring more tourists to the local area benefiting other local businesses in the services sector (accommodation, drink and food).
- 5.13 Promoting sustainable transport – there will be no impact on highways. While it is likely that people will frequently travel to site by private vehicle, these numbers will be minimal. In addition, the location is heavily used by cyclists and walkers and it is anticipated that some people will travel to the site on foot or by bicycle. In addition, the farm is within 20 minutes' walk of the nearest mainline railway station at Pangbourne so some visitors will be able to travel by public transport.
- 5.14 Making effective use of land – we are diversifying the current use of land to effectively double its use, for both grazing of livestock and to accommodate tourists and provide improved access to a beautiful riverside farm in this AONB.
- 5.15 Promoting healthy communities – this development will promote and improve access to rural space, offering beneficial opportunities for people to interact with the natural environment and enhance emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- 5.16 Having a good design – the winter-yurts yurt will be designed by the British Joinery Firm 'Rotunda Roundhouses Ltd' and built by their team of craftsmen to a very high standard. The structures will be totally unique with high quality fixtures and fittings. 100% of timber and materials are sourced from the UK. Rotunda have a strict no-import policy.
- 5.17 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. This site is not at risk of flooding from ground-water or surface-water.
- 5.18 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. These structures will ensure the viability of this farm by providing a sustainable revenue for the farm, meaning that the environment will be conserved for future generations. An ecological survey has shown that the structures will have minimal impact on the environment. The hedgerows which are the habitats of greatest ecological value within the site, will be retained and protected and also enhanced by following the suggestions within the ecological survey report in order to manage the hedgerow and create an ungrazed buffer of land alongside the hedge – a "wildlife strip". Bird nesting boxes will be added. Lighting will be selected sensitively in order to avoid impact on any bats or other wildlife in the vicinity.

5.2 South Oxfordshire Local Plan Policies

All the foregoing considerations demonstrate that this proposal will either meet the requirements of, or not be in conflict with, the following South Oxfordshire Local Plan (2011-2033) policies:-

5.2.2 Policy EMP11: Development in the countryside and rural areas

This policy expressly states that sustainable economic growth in the countryside and rural areas will be supported. The policy states “the council will promote the sustainable development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses”. The policy also details support for sustainable rural tourism that benefit businesses in rural areas and that respect the character of the countryside. This is a diversification project that also provides rural tourism and is designed to provide a sustained income for this agricultural business to supplement unpredictable livestock sales. There will be minimal impact on the character of the countryside since the winter yurts are small and sustainably produced and will be hidden from view by passers-by.

5.2.3 Policy EMP12: Tourism

South Oxfordshire District Council encourages new development to advance the visitor economy for leisure and business purposes. This includes farm diversification projects that are in keeping with the character of the locality.

5.2.4 Policy EMP10: Community Employment Plans

This development will provide potentially 1-2 part time employment positions. The positions would be well suited to local people.

5.2.5 Policy TRANS2: Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility

This development is within walking distance of the nearest railway station. The site is along well-used cycling and walking routes and may encourage use by pedestrians and cyclists.

5.2.6 Policy INF4: Water Resources

The development will have sufficient water supply. A sewage treatment system of appropriate size will be installed to manage sewage.

5.2.7 Policy ENV1: Landscape and Countryside

Development which supports economic growth in rural areas will be supported provided it conserves and enhances the landscape, countryside and rural areas. This development will have no negative impact on the countryside discussed above and in the ecological survey report.

5.2.8 Policy ENV3: Biodiversity – Non designated sites, habitats and species

This development will have minimal impact on biodiversity. See ecological survey report.

5.2.9 Policy ENV7: Listed Buildings

This development does not affect any listed buildings.

5.2.10 Policy ENV8: Conservation Areas

This development will not alter any views into or out of the AONB. The winter yurts are being located so that they would not visually detract from the character or appearance of the open countryside and that its visual impact is minimal from neighbouring houses, public footpaths, bridle paths or the public highway. The visibility of the units is blocked by a thick roadside hedgerow that completely masks the location of the units at their planned location partway up the gently-sloping hillside.

5.2.11 Policy ENV12: Pollution

This development will not result in any adverse impacts on human health, the natural environment or the amenity of neighbouring uses. Any noise created onsite during construction will be minimised by the choice of structures that are largely constructed off-site as a kit and assembled onsite over a short period of time of approximately one month.

5.2.12 Policy EP4: Flood Risk

According to the Environment Agency Flood Risk map for planning, this site is located within flood risk zone 1 (low risk for flooding). It is also within an area of very low risk of flooding from surface water, having less than 0.1% annual risk of flooding from this source. Since there will be no increase in the amount of hard standing related to this development, there will be no increase in ground-water run-off so no attendant increase in flood-risk elsewhere.

5.2.13 Policy DES6: Residential Amenity

The size and scale of the proposed development will therefore have no effect on the neighbouring amenity. There will no overlooking of any neighbour's property. External lighting will be minimal

5.2.14 Policy DES9: Promoting sustainable design

The structures will be built to ensure good energy efficiency by having good insulation and using energy efficient heating that will be supplemented by heating from a wood-burning stove that makes use of firewood available from on the farm.

5.3 The Chilterns LEADER Local Action Group Local Development Strategy

This application falls within the Chilterns local area development strategy in each of the following key areas that have been designated for support:

- Support for farm diversification in terms of providing economically sustainable on-farm tourism.
- Strengthening rural tourism by facilitating the provision of appropriate tourism accommodation, helping farmers benefit from tourism, and also encouraging the use of the countryside. This will be supported by the farm's plan to offer alpaca walking on the farm. With the location of the site also accessible from the River Thames via land owned by the applicant, the development will also be encouraging the use of river-based tourism.

5.4 It is accepted that the development would be in a parcel of agricultural land which is accessible by Hardwick Road. It is accepted that guests on the balance of probability, will access the site by private motor vehicle. For this reason we include in the proposal the provision of an off-road car parking area, accessible via an existing field access that is in frequent use currently by farm vehicles. A permeable cellular paving grid system will be used for the surface that allows grass to grow through while re-inforcing the surface to take vehicles without becoming muddy. Guests will need to walk from this parking area to the yurts in order to minimise environmental damage and loss of grazing.

5.5 We believe that the principle of development is acceptable and with the need for a countryside location, it is also deemed suitably close to existing services as to be considered sustainable for this type of development.

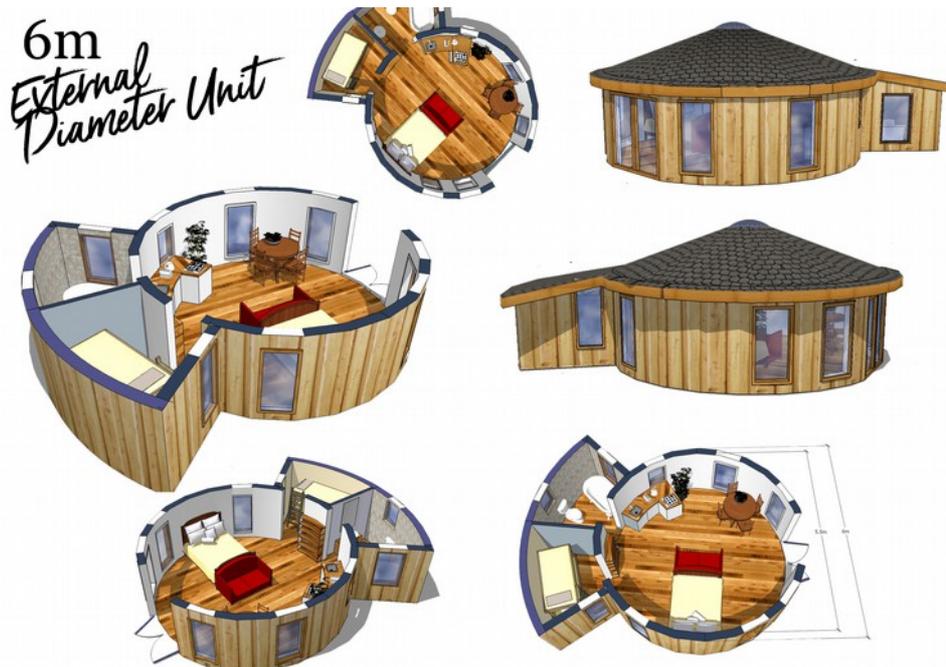
Good Practice Guide for Tourism

In accordance with the Guide, consideration has been given to the three key planning issues for tourism developments:

- **Where the development is located** – accessibility for visitors by means other than private cars since the location is within walking distance from the local railway station at Pangbourne. The site is also within half a mile of the Thames Path and along frequently used cycleways and footpaths, making it an ideal stopover point for tourists making their way using non-motorised means..The location and site plan has been chosen so as not to have an adverse impact on the environment.
- **How they are designed** – the buildings are attractive to users, they are functional and use natural resources in an efficient manner.
- **How they fit into their surroundings** – these buildings respect the environment, they complement it rather than detracting from it, and they have a positive impact on landscape, setting and ecology.



(An example of the interior of the glamping units)



(An example of the configuration and overall design style of the glamping units)

6.0 Design/Landscape:

- 6.1 The overall site has been identified as 5.4 Hectares, the built footprint of each winter-yurts are 30m² in total. The submission also details the roof and walls of the winter-yurt as being natural wood and dark grey composite slate to blend into the tree and hedge line.
- 6.2 The winter-yurts are suitable for M3 Accreditation of the National Accessibility Scheme for service and self-catering hostel and campus accommodation.
- 6.3 A great deal of thought has gone into the placement and design of the winter-yurts to ensure that they would not visually detract from the character or appearance of the open countryside and that it's visual impact is minimal from neighbouring houses, public footpaths, bridle paths or the public highway. The visibility of the units is blocked by a thick roadside hedgerow that completely masks the location of the units at their planned location partway up the gently-sloping hillside.
- 6.4 The area around the winter-yurts will be kept looking as natural as possible and as at present in order to blend into the surrounding countryside. Additional hedging will be planted alongside the yurts in order to screen them from each other.
- 6.5 Additional hedging will be planted to screen the yurts from view of the public footpath at the eastern end of the site.
- 6.6 There will be no outside lighting shining on hedgerows, to minimise any disturbance to wildlife. There will be blinds and heavy curtains to minimise light spill from the winter-yurts at night.
- 6.7 The development does not harm the character of the surrounding area.
- 6.8 Roads linking the development are adequate for the volume and type of traffic likely to be generated.
- 6.9 Rainwater run off will be sent to a soak-away around the perimeter of the building.

7.0 Neighbour Amenity

- 7.1 The site, excluding the property in the ownership of the applicant, is not overlooked by neighbours
- 7.2 The existing screening provided by trees and newly planted country hedgerows, would mitigate any perceived impact on the amenity.
- 7.3 The proposal is considered to accord with the requirements of SODC policy (at 5.2.13) as policy DES6 in the SODC Local Plan 2011-2033 (October 2017) as there would be no loss of privacy or overlooking; no overbearing or dominant impact; no loss of daylight; negligible noise; odours or fumes.

8.0 Highways/Access:

- 8.1 The site is to be served by the creation of a parking area for 5 vehicles, in the ownership of the applicant. A permeable cellular paving grid system will be used for the surface that allows grass to grow through while re-inforcing the surface to take vehicles without becoming muddy. The vehicles will be parked behind the hedgerow and so will not be visible from the road by passers-by.

8.2 There would be a maximum of five additional cars travelling to the site. We believe that there are no impacts to highways or access that can be anticipated as a result of the proposed development. From this in-current-use access, there are visual splays of over 420m to the east and 220m to the west, this being a largely straight road.



8.3 There are no flood risk, drainage, ecology or contamination issues associated with the proposed development.

Summary

We believe that the proposal forms a sustainable, small scale development of farm diversification, with a focus on quality of accommodation and unique and memorable experience.

This expansion, whilst remaining small in scale, is essential to the long-term viability of the wider enterprise and is beneficial to the local economy. As we diversify in line with the growth of the staycation market in Oxfordshire, we can add value to the local economy and promote sustainable tourism.

We intend to use this unit as a *holiday let only* and are happy for a conditional approval on this basis.

Appendix: Tourism in the UK

As cited in **The Economic Importance of Tourism - UK Tourism Satellite Accounts: 2010 and 2011** (The Tourism Intelligence Unit (TIU) in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has produced in this release the 2010 and 2011)

The key findings were that:

- Tourism Direct GVA was £53bn in 2011 an increase from £49bn in 2010
- Tourism Direct Employment rose from 1.55 million in 2010 to 1.67 million in 2011
- The number of Tourism Direct Full-time Equivalent jobs rose from 1.22 million in 2010 to 1.31 million in 2011
- Domestic tourism expenditure rose from £92.7bn in 2010 to £99.8bn in 2011
- Inbound tourism expenditure rose from £19.6bn in 2010 to £21.0bn in 2011

The UK Tourism Satellite Account (UK-TSA) indicates that tourism demand was responsible for 3.6 per cent of all goods and services supplied in the UK economy in 2011. In the same year, internal tourism consumption was about £125 billion, compared with £115 billion in 2010.

Tourism Demand

In 2011, total expenditure by domestic overnight visitors in the UK was approximately £23.5 billion, an increase on the 2010 total of £20.8 billion.

This application has been prepared with reference to:

National Planning Policy
All standard policies listed (including NPPF):

CS10 Rural Economy
Policy CS 9 Location and Type of Business Development
Policy CS 15 Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency

CDN126 Core Strategy for Chiltern District -Chilterns AONB

South Oxon Emerging Local Plan 2011-2033:

South Oxfordshire Core Strategy, Inspector's Report 2012

“South Oxfordshire has a strongly rural character with small towns and villages of historic importance and interest, many set in attractive landscapes including parts of the Chilterns and North Wessex AONBs. These assets make income from tourists and visitors important to the local economy, but the CS policies do not overtly recognise this.

MM17 remedies this deficiency by inserting a new criterion relating to tourism into **CSEM1**. **This will permit the economic benefits of any new tourism proposals to be weighed more overtly against the conservation of important natural and heritage assets.** It would be unnecessary and inappropriate at this stage for the CS to refer to particular potential locations or individual types of tourism proposals since these are capable of being brought forward in the SADPD or judged by Development Management policies if and when necessary.”