

## PLANNING REPORT

Site Name : Land off Back Lane, Headlam

Site Location : County Durham, DL2 3HA

Combined Planning and Design & Access Statement in support of a Planning Application to change the use of the land for the siting of 2 no. Shepherds Huts.



On behalf of:  
Alistair Burn

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**Plans.**

Plan 1 – Site Location.(DL2-2615-01)

Plan 2 – Proposed Plans (DL2-2615-02)

Plan 3 – Proposed Visuals (DL2-2615-03)



## **1. Introduction.**

### **1.1. Background.**

1.1.1. This statement has been prepared to support a planning application to change the use of the land for the siting of 2 no. Shepherds hut units, on land off Back Lane, Headlam.

### **1.2. The Site and its surroundings.**

1.2.1. The proposed development site is situated within a wider, predominately agricultural site, just to the west of the main built up area of the village of Headlam. Plan 1, appended to this report, illustrates the location of the site at 1:2500 scale.

1.2.2. A private access is situated along Back Lane which will provide a means of vehicular access into the site.

1.2.3. Headlam is the nearest village which is approximately a 5 min walk or 3 min cycle from the site, access can be achieved to the south of the main entrance via a gated footpath, thereby avoiding any need for pedestrians to use the unlit Back Lane after dark.

1.2.4. The site comprises a field of improved grassland. Tree cover on the proposal site takes the form of fairly well established perimeter hedgerow and tree planting, providing a sense of seclusion and enclosure which lends itself to an inherently tranquil environment for visitors.

### **1.3. Description of the Development.**

1.3.1. The development proposal will consist of 2.no Shepherds huts along with ancillary parking. The site already benefits from extensive mature perimeter planting along its frontage onto Back Lane. These features set the tone for the site, of which the focus is quiet relaxation, where nature and the landscape form the backdrop against which visitors will plan their time and benefit from the inherent tranquillity the environs provide.

### **1.4. Planning History.**

1.4.1. There is no relevant previous planning permissions in relation to this proposal.



## 2. Case in Support of the Application.

### 2.1. Introduction.

- 2.1.1. The demand for self-catering holiday lodges in the UK and in County Durham has increased in recent years as, following an increase in the cost of overseas holidays (and an emerging understanding of the impacts of the overseas travel restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 pandemic), the domestic holiday sector has seen a commensurate boom. For GB as a whole, there was a +3.6% increase in tourism trips taken between 2018 and 2019 . In the same period, expenditure increased by +2.9% to £24.7 billion. England saw an overall increase in trips compared to 2018 of +1.7%.
- 2.1.2. According to the most up to date analysis from Visit Britain, during 2019, GB residents took a total of 122.8 million overnight tourism trips to destinations in England, Scotland or Wales; amounting to 371.8 million bed nights and £24.7 billion was spent during these trips. 4.253 million of these overnight trips were to the North East of England region, which includes County Durham. 1.187 million of these overnight stays were in “Glamping/alternative accommodation e.g. yurt, tipi, ecopod”, a category which includes Shepherds huts.
- 2.1.3. Self-catered holidays tend to be longer breaks than the average, typically lasting over 5 nights, compared to just over 3 across all English trips on average. Linked to this, total spend on this type of break is higher than the average.
- 2.1.4. Holiday schemes of the nature proposed reflect these trends by catering to the holiday needs of typical longer stay visitors to the District, contribute to the overall supply of visitor accommodation, and have many other tangible spin off benefits in term of boosting and diversifying the local economy.
- 2.1.5. This statement will go on to demonstrate that the proposal is both sustainable tourism development and also fully compliant with existing National and Local Development Plan policies, and as such, that there is a undoubtedly an extremely robust case for considering this application as fully compliant in policy terms and hence giving it positive consideration. It will also demonstrate that there are no unacceptable adverse effects on interests of acknowledged importance resulting from the proposal.



### 3. Planning Policy.

#### 3.1. Planning Framework.

3.1.1. The following sections will provide an analysis of key policy issues that impact on this proposal.

#### 3.2. National Guidance.

##### 3.2.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, “The Framework”), July 2021.

##### 3.2.2. Rural leisure and tourism.

3.2.3. In the part of the Framework that deals with “Supporting a prosperous rural economy”, NPPF para. 84 provides that planning policies and decisions should enable “*the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas*” and that this expressly includes “*sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside*”.

##### 3.2.4. Rural Accessibility.

3.2.5. The NPPF states in paragraph 105 that “*..opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.*”, thereby acknowledging that transport choices will be more limited in rural locations.

##### 3.2.6. Issues relating to the determination of this application.

3.2.7. The proposal is highly compliant with the NPPF, which accepts rural tourism schemes as among a category of uses and development types that are inherently appropriate in rural locations. The proposal provides a form of high quality visitor accommodation which, as I will go on to demonstrate, is lacking in the immediate area and the District as a whole. Therefore, the proposal contributes to improving both the overall quality, as well as potentially extending the length, of typical visitor stays in this part of the District.

3.2.8. In terms of considering options to maximise sustainable transport solutions, these matters are considered in the Design & Access Statement which accompanies this application.



### 3.3. Local Policy.

#### 3.3.1. The County Durham Plan 2020 (“CDP”).

3.3.2. The CDP seeks to focus on delivering more and better jobs; the delivery of a wide choice of quality homes meeting needs and in locations that reduce the need to travel and where people want to live; protecting and enhancing our high quality built, historic and natural environment; and ensuring that the key infrastructure required to support this growth such as transport, health and education is delivered alongside any future development.

#### 3.3.3. Vision.

3.3.4. Integral to the CDP is the Vision to 2035, *“County Durham will have a thriving economy, reducing levels of deprivation, social exclusion and joblessness with the associated health and quality of life improvements”.*

3.3.5. In respect of the role of the visitor economy, the vision statement includes:

*“The county’s rural areas will be continuing to play a vital role in the county’s economy, employment and tourism, including through diversification....”*

3.3.6. In order to achieve the Vision of the CDP to 2035, objectives have been formulated around the key issues the plan needs to address. Objective 15 outlines the role for the Visitor Economy, and states the objective is to *“Strengthen County Durham’s role as a visitor/tourist destination through supporting and enhancing existing attractions, visitor accommodation, townscapes, landscapes and the historic and natural environment.”*

#### 3.3.7. Issues relating to the determination of this application.

3.3.8. At the heart of the CDP, the Vision recognises the role of the visitor economy, and clearly promotes and encourages new and expanded businesses in this sector of the economy.



### **3.3.9.Evidence Base.**

3.3.10. Policies in the CDP are underpinned by an evidence base, in the case of tourist and visitor accommodation, the Durham Tourism Management Plan 2016–2020 (Visit County Durham).

3.3.11. The Durham Tourism Management Plan (DTMaP) is the blueprint for how Durham intends to grow the volume and value of its visitor economy between 2016 and 2020.

3.3.12. In considering Durham's offer/gap analysis, the DTMaP highlights (with my emphasis) that "*The 2012 Accommodation Study for the county **highlighted accommodation that the county lacks** for which there is potential visitor demand. **This includes:** boutique hotels – particularly in Durham City, quality bed and breakfast accommodation, inns with rooms, good quality 3 star properties, **glamping sites, good quality camping and caravanning and lodge accommodation.** The number of visitors staying overnight in the county remains static; a lack of new accommodation options may be part of the reason for this."*

### **3.3.13.Policy 8: Visitor Accommodation.**

3.3.14. The preamble to CDP policy 8 recognises that "Tourism accommodation in rural areas, providing it is in suitable locations, can have a positive impact on the local economy, including some social benefits."

3.3.15. Policy 8 states that:

*"1. Subject to parts 2 and 3 of this policy, all new visitor accommodation or extensions to existing visitor accommodation, will be supported where:*

- a. it is appropriate to the scale and character of the area; and*
- b. it is not used for permanent residential occupation.*

*2. Proposals for visitor accommodation that are in the countryside will be supported where they meet criteria (a) to (b) and where:*

- c. it is necessary to meet identified visitor needs; or*
- d. it is an extension to existing visitor accommodation and helps to support future business viability or is a conversion of an existing building; and*
- e. it respects the character of the countryside; and*
- f. it demonstrates clear opportunities to make its location more sustainable.*





*3. Proposals for new, and extensions to existing, sites for chalets, camping(46) and caravaning (both static and touring) along with associated storage and infrastructure will be supported where they meet criteria (a) to (f) and where:*

*g. they provide a specific Flood Risk Warning and Evacuation Plan in accordance with Table 2 in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Technical Guidance; and*

*h. they are not unduly prominent in the landscape from either long or short range views by ensuring:*

*(i) adequate year-round screening through existing topography, vegetation or other features which are compatible with the landscape. Where new or additional screening is required this must be suitably established before development can take place;*

*(ii) the layout would not adversely affect the character of the area; and*

*(iii) the materials and colour of chalets or static caravans, site services and infrastructure are designed to blend with the surroundings of the site and are limited in scale to the needs of the site occupants only.“*

#### 3.3.16. Issues relating to the determination of this application.

3.3.17. This is a proposal for new visitor accommodation, albeit on a very modest scale, and hence considered entirely appropriate for the locality, being situated on the edge of the village of Headlam.

3.3.18. Supporting evidence to the CDP confirms an overall unmet need for this type of visitor accommodation.

3.3.19. Appropriate conditions can be imposed to ensure that the Shepherds huts are not used for permanent residential accommodation.

3.3.20. The proposal site is entirely within Flood Zone 1 and hence criteria g.) Is not applicable.

3.3.21. The preceding sections of this report will demonstrate the proposal is acceptable in terms of siting and design.



#### **4. Design & Access.**

##### **4.1. Background.**

4.1.1. The purpose of a Design and Access Statement is to communicate the design process and considerations that have informed this scheme, and also how the design considers the accessibility of the site.

##### **4.2. Context.**

###### **4.2.1.Existing buildings/structures on and surrounding the Site.**

4.2.2. The proposed development is the change of use of the land for the siting of 2 No. Shepherds huts on an existing paddock. An existing block layout plan is included as Plan 2.

4.2.3. The proposal site is located on the south side of Back Lane, a rural road. The site, a 0.7 ha. field currently used as grazing land, has an existing gated access off Back Lane. To the south lie farm buildings and dwellings, the western extent of the built up area of Headlam village. Headlam is characterised by vernacular rural cottages, larger freestanding dwellings with substantial surrounding plots, and farm buildings, in a mixture of heights and massing, interspersed with more modern houses and bungalows. To the north lie open fields set behind mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees.

###### **4.2.4.Landform & topography.**

4.2.5. The site is generally flat with no pronounced changes in level, although there is a gentle slope southwards. A distinctive mature hedgerow and one mature standard tree, an Ash, are present on the northern site boundary.

###### **4.2.6.Existing Access.**

4.2.7. The proposed use will not require a change in access arrangements, as vehicles accessing the proposal site will utilise the existing gated access off Back Lane. Pedestrian access to the main body of the village can be achieved via an existing gated access to the south of the main site access.



### **4.3. Design Principles.**

#### **4.3.1. Development Requirements.**

4.3.2. The development requirement is to erect 2 no. Shepherds huts. Plan 3 includes photomontages which illustrate the appearance of the Shepherds huts in situ via 3d imagery.

#### **4.3.3. Scale and Appearance.**

4.3.4. The 3D visualisations demonstrates that the introduction of 2 no. Shepherds huts in proximity to the northern/Back Lane site frontage will have very low visual impact, the proposal being of minimal scale and integrated into the surrounding countryside by the addition of planting which will soften the impact of the huts and help to provide a sense of enclosure and seclusion for visitors. The entire ethos of the proposal is to maintain a tranquil and “quiet” site suitable for relaxation and peaceful enjoyment of the countryside environs of the site. Shepherds huts are not uncommon features in the modern rural landscape, and in such low numbers cannot be said to have an urbanising effect.

4.3.5. In terms of layout, the proposed siting of the 2 huts will leave ample amenity space, and the introduction of planting around the 2 units will create a pleasing and “wilding” effect to the site, adding complexity and softening the impact of the scheme, as opposed to simply siting them on bare grassland. The “tall hedge” along the northern site boundary is to be retained and managed.

4.3.6. There is considered to be ample separation between the proposed site for the 2 huts so as to prevent any adverse impacts on views from existing dwellings to the south of the site. The maintenance of the existing hedgerow will screen views into the site from open countryside from the north in all but very close, glimpsed passing views from vehicles driving along Back Lane.



#### **4.3.7.Sustainability & Green Design.**

4.3.8. The National Planning Policy Framework puts great weight on considering local needs, and approving sustainable proposals without delay. The Framework defines three dimensions to sustainable development:

- An Economic Role
- A Social Role
- An Environmental Role

4.3.9. Economic: Visitor expenditure (not including rent) in all forms of self catering accommodation (source: "Pitching the Value:2019 Economy Benefit Report: Holiday Parks and Campsites UK", Frontline obo the UK Caravan and Camping Alliance) averaged £101 per visitor day. The proposal therefore has the potential to contribute a modest but not insubstantial revenue into the local economy. The site will be managed so to maximise such spin off expenditure very locally, through provision of literature for local attractions and features of visitor interest, literature allowing local services such as hairdressers, beauticians to sell to visitors, and a chandlery stall which will include local farm produce.

4.3.10. Social: The proposal will make a modest contribution to meeting the identified need for additional visitor accommodation of the type proposed and extend the choice and range of visitor accommodation available in this part of County Durham.

4.3.11. Environmental: The huts will be procured based on the most environmentally friendly forms of manufacture, and to as high an energy performance standard as possible. All other materials (eg surfacing materials) will be from sustainable sources. Maintenance of the site and existing hedgerows, and additional planting proposed, will be undertaken so as create new habitats and help diversify the species richness of the site wherever possible. The applicants would be willing to accept conditions requiring provision of a Biodiversity Action Plan to secure these benefits of the proposal.

#### **4.3.12.Promoting Safer Communities.**

4.3.13. The development will be set within a safe and accessible environment where crime and disorder and fear of crime are minimised through the consideration of natural surveillance from the proposed huts, and low level on-site security lighting.



#### 4.4. Access Principles.

##### 4.4.1. Reducing the need to travel.

4.4.2. “Glamping” and shepherds huts sites are relatively low generators of vehicle movements. The TRICS database has been used to estimate the number of vehicular trips likely to be generated by the proposed Shepherds Hut development during the weekday AM and PM peak hours using surveys at ‘Holiday Accommodation’ sites.

Time Period	Trip Rates per Unit		Trip Generation (2 Units)		Total
	In	Out	In	Out	
AM Peak (0800–0900)	0.025	0.044	0.05	0.08	0.13
PM Peak (1700–1800)	0.164	0.061	0.32	0.64	0.96
Daily (0700–22:00)	1.281	0.992	2.5	1.98	4.48

Fig 1 – Vehicular Rates and Generation.

4.4.3. The figures presented at Fig. 1 above indicate that the proposed development is anticipated to generate just 0.13 vehicular trips in the morning peak hour and 0.96 vehicular trips in the evening peak hour, and a total of 4.48 vehicular trips per day.

4.4.4. While the site lends itself more to sedentary and quiet breaks rather than as a touring base, a wide range of features of visitor interest and tourist attractions are available to enjoy in County Durham.

4.4.5. A chandlery stall to be opened in the mornings will provide most of the day to day convenience goods need of visitors, and a twice weekly communal supermarket delivery will be coordinated with guests. This will prevent the need to travel to shop, and if necessary, guests weekly shop can be ordered and delivered in advance on this basis, awaiting their arrival.

4.4.6. The public bar and restaurant of the Headlam Hall Spa Hotel is easily and safely walkable for guests wishing to dine out or seek evening entertainment.



#### **4.4.7.Vehicular Access & Parking.**

4.4.8. Plan 2 illustrates proposed parking arrangements. Chipping surfaced hard standing will be provided for 3 cars, accessed via the existing gated access off Back Lane. The drive to the parking area will also be surfaced with chipping.

#### **4.4.9.Walking, cycling and public transport.**

4.4.10. Pedestrian access to the south of the main site access allows safe and convenient access to the main area of Headlam. A low impact lighting plan for the site can be secured by condition if the Council so wish.

4.4.11. Surrounding roads are lightly trafficked and are ideal for touring and sports cycling.

4.4.12. Headlam as a whole lacks a walkable bus stop, and bus service frequencies and journey times are likely to deter visitors from utilising such options. However, the County Durham Link2 Dial-a-Ride bus service is pre bookable for trips within the County Durham Council area for visitors wishing to use public transport.

#### **4.4.13.Internal Access.**

4.4.14. All internal configurations of the Shepherds huts will comply with all relevant industry standards, including access to and into the building, internal circulation, and accessible electrical switches and sockets.



Combined Planning and Design & Access Statement in support of a Planning Application to change the use of the land for the siting of 2 no. Shepherds huts; Land off Back Lane, Headlam.

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