

# DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A  
GLAMPING SITE AT  
MIDDLE FARM,  
GRENDON UNDERWOOD,  
AYLESBURY,  
BUCKS,  
HP18 0SP

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## 1.0 Executive Summary

Proposed are a total of 6no. glamping units for guest use along with associated parking, footpaths, landscaping and a new connection to the existing mains sewerage network.

The new pod accommodation will be a farm diversification project to provide an additional income to the existing established Middle Farm.

The plot is situated in West Buckinghamshire approximately 10 miles west of the larger town of Aylesbury. The proposed glamping site will offer subtle and discreet countryside accommodation for tourists visiting this area's attractions on short breaks and weekend stays.

## 2.0 Policy

In designing the proposed glamping site, the **Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (2013-2033)** was referenced, and the following policies were considered. It is believed that the proposal is compliant with each of the following policies:

- S1 – Sustainable development for Aylesbury Vale

It is believed this proposal complies with both this policy and the sustainable development principles set out in the NPPF. Making use of natural materials and incorporating minimal construction practices throughout the design and build stages.

The development will help build a stronger local economy to the village of Grendon Underwood and the surrounding smaller villages and towns. Additionally social benefits will be created from this proposal to support and promote healthy and active communities. As the site is in a countryside location, the site will benefit from additional native planting and species to help enhance the visuals and biodiversity aspects of the site.

It is noted in the local plan that Grendon Underwood is classed as a medium village and therefore can be seen as a sustainable location for development as there are existing key services and facilities readily available for the public.

- S3 – Settlement hierarchy and cohesive development

As mentioned above, Grendon Underwood is considered a medium village and is therefore 4<sup>th</sup> in the settlement hierarchy. The development has been specifically located to allow both the existing Middle Farm and the new glamping units to run in conjunction with one another.

The new development will not compromise the character of the countryside or create a negative impact on the identity of neighbour settlements or communities. The site is not located on the outskirts and is of a small footprint therefore no connection of settlements is possible.

The units are of a temporary nature and therefore cannot be characterised as permanent new buildings in the countryside. Ground screws will be used to mount the units and due to the existing topography of the land, little landscaping would be required to site the units. Due to these features, this will allow the land to revert to its previous agricultural use at the end of the pods lifetime.

- E8 – Tourist accommodation

The proposed site is located at Middle Farm, in the small settlement of Grendon Underwood. The new glamping accommodation will be an extension to the existing farm business, allowing an additional income to help with the rising upkeep and general maintenance of the farm. The development will be made as sustainable as possible to comply with the council's sustainability vision. It is noted further in this report that the site is well located to allow guests use of existing public transport facilities and walking networks.

Due to the temporary nature of the chosen units, it is thought they would be considered in the same category as 'new camping and touring caravan sites', the units are also of appropriate dimensions to fit into the definition of a caravan.

There is no intention to use the unit for long-term lease / permanent residences. Such a small-scale development and the compact footprint of the glamping unit would not be suited to this in any case.

We would be happy to agree to a conditions stating the units shall not be occupied by the same person or persons for more than 28 consecutive days in a six month period and they will be used for short-term holiday lets and for no other purpose.

- T1 – Delivering the sustainable transport vision

With the site being suitably located adjacent to the village of Grendon Underwood, guests can make use of the existing public transport options in the area such as public rights of way and public bus services. With the nearest bus stop adjacent to the site access on Main Street.

Cycle storage will be incorporated into the site design along with electric vehicle charging bays to promote sustainable travel options.

- T6 – Vehicle parking & T8 – Electric vehicle parking

The proposed parking on site has been designed to ensure it complies with the parking standards set out in this local plan. In total there will be 10 parking bays, 4 which are dedicated to electrical vehicles with charging facilities. Cycle storage is also provided next to the car parking bays for guests who wish to use their bikes during their stay.

- T7 – Footpaths and cycle routes & C4 – Protection of public rights of way

With plenty of existing footpaths in the area, guests will also have access to the nearby cycle routes 50 and 51, connecting Oxfordshire with Essex passing through Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk.

A public right of way runs through a small area of the proposed site, the site operators will ensure this remains as is with minimal development effects. Members of the public will be free to use this path both during and after the construction of the site. Guests will be encouraged to explore these paths during their stay.

- BE1 – Heritage assets

The existing access for the site is located in a small conservation area, made up of 7 dwellings and their surroundings on Main Street. It is noted throughout this report that the access into the site from Main Street is existing and in good condition to accommodate the additional cars associated with the development. Therefore, no improvements or additional work has been proposed for this area.

An existing track towards the rear of the dwellings is also to be utilised to direct guests toward the new parking area. Please note this new parking area has been located out of the conservation area. Through the proposed planting scheme, additional screening will be created from the pod site to the conservation area, allowing any external views to be of nature from both the pods and the conservation area.

It is therefore believed the development does not pose any threat or harm to the conservation area and will respect the existing features around the site by utilising similar materials as to what is already in place.

- BE2 – Design of new development & BE4 – Density of new development

As seen on the proposed site layout plan, the scale and design of the site has been specifically chosen to ensure the development is respectful of the existing features surrounding the site. The units chosen are temporary in nature and have been located close to existing farm features, so they do not appear out of character in the area. Additional screening has been proposed around each boundary of the site to conceal the development further and ensure no neighbouring views are affected.

- BE3 – Protection of the amenity of residents

All units have been positioned facing away from the surrounding residential properties, with views facing northeast across the scenic countryside. Ensuring no unit is overlooking any properties and no existing property is overlooking the pods.

Guests will be provided with a manual upon their arrival which consists of site rules that must be followed at all times. These are to ensure no disturbance will be created to surrounding properties including the site applicant's dwelling. The site will be marked as a quiet countryside retreat and will not permit party groups. With the addition of native planting around the units, we do not believe noise or light pollution will be produced, allowing residents to remain unaffected by the development.

- NE4 – Landscape character and locally important landscapes

Careful consideration has been given to the siting of the units and associated development. The height and scale of the proposed units are minimal in size and are designed to integrate well into the landscape.

Small scale lighting bollards are proposed along the permeable footpaths to provide safety when walking at night, these will be low light to ensure no negative effects are created on the existing rural setting.

No existing trees or hedgerows are required to be removed to support this proposal, additional planting will be introduced around the site to enhance the landscape character and biodiversity on the site.

- NE8 – Trees, hedgerows and woodlands

As previously stated, no trees or hedgerows are required to be removed or relocated to support this development. The accompanying landscape plan details indicative positions of new native trees, hedges and shrubs around the site.

Sections of meadow grass and wildflower meadows will be created between the units. Biodiversity enhancements such as bird boxes, insect houses/hotels and log piles will be incorporated into the site to enhance and promote wildlife in the area.

## 2.1 – Case Studies

While preparing this application, additional research has been carried out to determine previous applications of a similar nature and their outcome within the surrounding areas. It was found there have been 3 previous applications of a similar nature within Aylesbury Vale introducing glamping into the area. Out of these 3 applications, it is noted 2 have been approved with conditions and one has been withdrawn.

In 2016 a proposal was made for 6 glamping pods at Upper Wingbury Farm. Reference 16/03381/APP. It should be noted that the documents associated with this application were not available online to review. However, it can be seen online the site is currently open and operating with 3 pods. The existing site has much of the same characteristics as our proposed application. With similar pods to be used with a small area of decking to the front and side to allow for private outdoor seating areas. It is believed that this site is further out of the surrounding villages meaning guests may have to travel a little further to reach amenities.

In 2022 a further proposal for the siting of a glamping pod and facilities was submitted retrospectively. Reference 22/04134/APP. It was stated that as the unit was appropriately located in the countryside to provide tourist accommodation for a rural experience. As the development is small-scale in nature it was considered that any landscape impact would be neutral and not anything to be concerned of.

It is thought the proposed development follows very similar aspects of both of these previously approved applications. While still following the relevant policies of the local plan and the NPPF.

## 3.0 Site and Surrounding Area

### 3.1 Location

The site is located adjacent to the small village of Grendon Underwood. The surroundings are rich in tourist attractions, with many walking opportunities village shops, pubs and other attractions/activities. This proposal will create a significant economic benefit to the surrounding area and local businesses. With easy road access via the A41 with connections to the M40, the site will also be accessible from across the country.

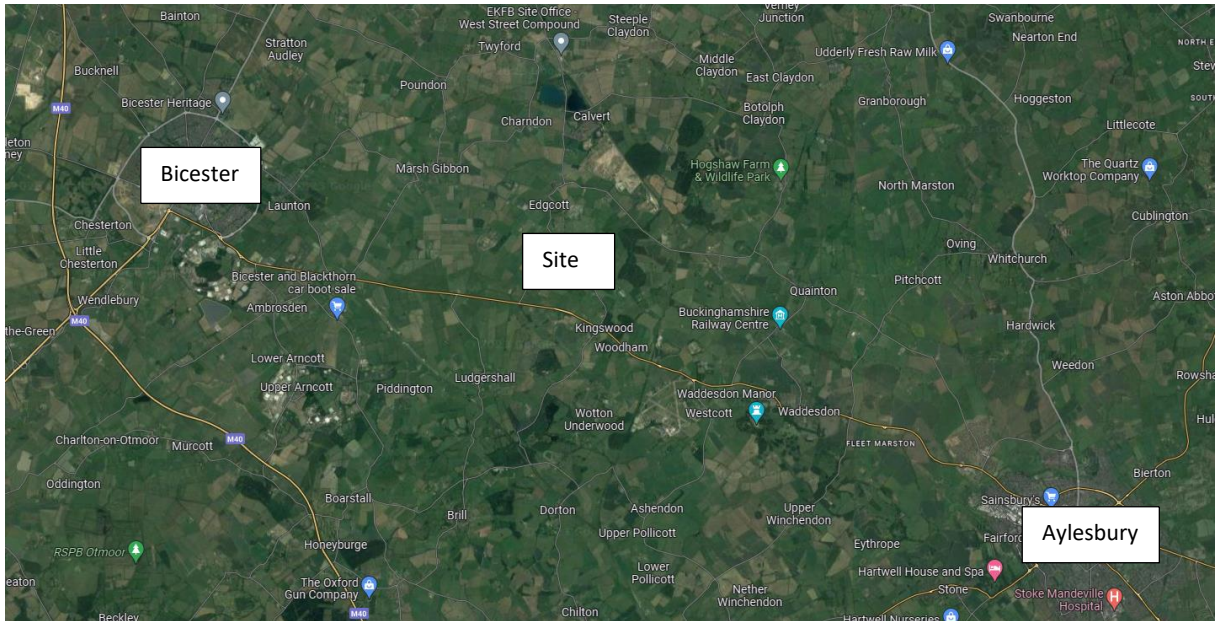


Figure 1 – Aerial View showing Location.



Figure 2 – Aerial View of Site.



## 3.2 Proposed Site Information

The plot for the proposed glamping site will occupy approx. 7,677 m<sup>2</sup> of the applicant's land. The vast majority of the site will be left as open green space to respect the landscape.

The existing farm entrance on Main Street will be the access route to reach the glamping site, guests will use this entry point and follow the existing track towards the dedicated site parking area. Visibility and access are good in both directions on this road. This can be seen in figures 3 and 4 below.



*Figure 3 – Access Road facing East.*



*Figure 4 – Access Road facing West.*



Figure 5 – Existing access into the site.

The existing site boundaries are met with a mix of timber fencing, trees and hedgerows. These will offer ample screening from existing properties situated to the south of the site.

The nearest neighbouring residence is approximately 153m from the nearest glamping unit, located to the south of the site, the residence is surrounded by existing hedges and trees. It is therefore not expected that noise from the units will impact any neighbours. In our experience, glamping guests tend to be respectful to others and do not create noise in any case.

The surrounding areas of the site provide ample activities and experiences for guests to enjoy during their visit with Finemere Wood, Bernwood Forest and Calvert Jubilee Nature Reserve in close proximity. Guests can also visit Woodlands Fishery, Thames Valley Pigeon Shooting and Hogshaw Farm and Wildlife Park.

### 3.3 Justification for Proposed Use

The glamping site will offer contemporary accommodation to visitors within a suitable travel distance from London, Birmingham, Cambridge and Northampton. With public transport links available thus being suitable for weekend trips and short breaks.

The proposed site will be on a tranquil countryside field situated near the existing farm buildings. Glamping installations require minimal groundwork and non-harmful construction practices. Through the use of ground screws to mount the units, concrete may not be required at all. We, therefore, believe the units will provide an ecologically viable accommodation solution, suited to the area.

The concept of luxury glamping is now gaining popularity throughout the UK, with standards and guests' expectations on the rise. At the moment, there is little presence in the area offering this kind of luxury glamping accommodation giving guests exclusive facilities. Therefore, we feel the site would be providing a positive high-quality, exciting new experience for visitors to the area.

## 3.4 Farm Diversification

The development will be a form of farm diversification, supporting the sustainability and longevity of Middle Farm. This is a family run farm business currently housing livestock. The proposed glamping business will allow additional income to be put back into the farm, permitting for future expansion possibilities and the opportunity to upgrade and maintain the existing facilities and equipment. The diversification will also help negate the need for certain government grants for the farm to become self-sufficient when possible.

The glamping business will likewise be run by the same family members, providing them with a secure job and viable reason to stay in the area.

Guests will have the opportunity to meet and learn about the range of animals on the farm to help educate and expose individuals to the traditional ways of farming.

The chosen area of land is away from daily farm operations and will ensure no disruption is created to daily farm processes or animals and to ensure guests are located in a safe location away from large farm equipment. Utilising this land will provide guests with a countryside escape with incredible views across the countryside, while simultaneously providing an economic benefit to both the local area and Middle Farm.



*Figure 6 – View across proposed site.*

## 4.0 Use

The unit will be rented out on a per-nightly basis. Patrons would likely be couples or friends. Party groups will not be permitted by the operator.

The site would be operated as a typical (year-round) holiday let, much like a caravan site, but with much fewer guests, meaning less noise and disruption to neighbouring properties and road users etc. The units will also be marketed as a peaceful and relaxing retreat, offering them a chance to reconnect with nature, which again should mean noise from guests is not a consideration.

## 5.0 Amount

The table below shows the breakdown of the used area and remaining green space.

Land Usage Item	Area Used	% of Overall Site
Greater Ownership Boundary.	326 acres	100% (of ownership boundary)
Redline boundary.	7,677 m <sup>2</sup>	<1 % (of ownership area)
Existing track.	492 m <sup>2</sup>	7% (of site boundary)
Green Space – Proposed Site.	7,185 m <sup>2</sup>	93% (of site boundary)
Green Space – After Site Build.	6,325 m <sup>2</sup>	88 % (of green space)
Glamping units (6).	131 m <sup>2</sup>	1.8 % (of green space)
Proposed parking area.	451 m <sup>2</sup>	6.3 % (of green space)
Footpaths.	278 m <sup>2</sup>	3.9 % (of green space)

## 6.0 Layout

The proposed glamping site will utilise an existing access onto Main Street. After entering the site, guests will follow an existing track through to the rear of the dwellings. Through an existing gate, guests will find a newly formed permeable parking area equipped with 10no parking bays, bike storage and waste facilities.

From the new parking area, guests will follow a permeable footpath to reach their glamping pod. All tracks will be a lightweight permeable material; formed using compacted stone chippings to match the proposed parking area. Low-level motion-sensored LED lighting bollards will be provided to the tracks for safety when walking at night. A low level is proposed to minimise effects on local wildlife.

The units will be sited to the north of the site facing northeast across the scenic countryside views. This will ensure that no units look into one another and there is no threat to the residential amenity of neighbouring properties.

All pods will have a private decking area that stretches to the front and side of the unit. This will provide all guests with a private outdoor area where they can spend mornings and evenings admiring the view.

A covered communal decking area will be placed between the units to provide an outdoor space that can be used and enjoyed by all guests.

The design implemented for the site has purposely underdeveloped the site, utilizing less than 10% of the site area for the entire development. Enhancements proposed for the site, such as wildflower planting and landscaping have been considered with neighbouring privacy and biodiversity in mind.



*Figure 7 – Artist Impression of proposed site design.*

## 7.0 Scale

A total of 6no. units are proposed on this site. These are all to be manufactured off site and delivered prefabricated. They will be installed through the use of ground screws to minimise the need for construction of concrete areas.

The units are to be under 3.1m in height to ensure no restriction of neighbouring views occurs. The units fit within the definition of a caravan and therefore can be defined as a temporary unit capable of being moved easily. For more information on sizing and for detailed elevations please see drawing 230406-01-05.



*Figure 8 – Example exterior view of proposed unit.*

## 8.0 Public Rights of Way

There are multiple public rights of way surrounding the site. Many which passes through the applicant's ownership. These can all be seen detailed on the layout plan to demonstrate how the site does not interfere with these paths.

No development crosses over any of the existing paths except for one small section of the proposed footpath from the parking area to the pods. No change in level will be created here and it will remain clear of any obstructions. The site operators will ensure that these paths will be readily available for public use both during and after construction of the site.



*Figure 9 – FootPathMap illustration of public rights of way surrounding the site.*

Guests can utilise these public paths to explore the natural environment and to visit surrounding towns and villages such as Marsh Gibbon and Kingswood.

## 9.0 Landscaping

Some minor levelling will be required to create suitable footings for the pods. The intention is to maintain the even gradient of the site, thus preventing the need for any retaining structures. Gravel will be utilized under and around the units to manage surface water where needed and any broken ground will be reinstated (turfed where required).

Additional planting of native trees, shrubs and sections of meadow grass and wildflower meadows have been proposed. This is to create natural screening of the units from one another and from neighbouring properties.

Within these areas are proposed biodiversity enhancements to encourage wildlife to the site. Insect houses/hotels will be scattered around the site alongside bird and bat boxes which will be placed on sturdy trees when they have matured enough.

Native hedgerow has been proposed at the southern, western and eastern boundaries of the site to create a natural parting between the glamping site and the surrounding farmland. These will also contribute to enhancing biodiversity on the land.



*Figure 10 – Artist impression of proposed site with additional planting.*



## 10.0 Design

### 10.1 Stage 1 – Access

Main Street is a well-maintained public road. The minimal increase in traffic associated with the glamping unit site will be of a negligible impact on the surrounding area with a maximum of 10no. vehicles at any one time at the site. Please note it is not expected for the site to generate the maximum number of cars at all times.

The existing entrance and access to the site will provide initial access for the installation of plant and equipment this will also be the site vehicular access to the parking and turning area. The access has been constructed to comply with highway regulations and provides good visibility in both directions.

### 10.2 Stage 2 - Groundwork

Due to natural undulations and the general unevenness of the site, minor levelling will be required to prepare the glamping unit footings, ground screws will be used for minimal disruption. No retaining walls or structure will be required.

Any new shrubbery planted will match that of the local area as closely as possible and have been detailed in the proposed layout plan.

Following this, services ducting will be laid for power, water and telecoms as required. Pipework will be run for water and cables for electricity and telecoms will be pulled.

New drainage runs will be created with a main stem connecting to the existing main sewer system nearby.

### 10.3 Stage 3 –Glamping Unit Installation

The proposed pods are to be prefabricated off-site and delivered as a complete unit. The aim of the design is to minimise disruption to the site as much as possible. The design plans to remove a minimal amount of soil from the unit bases to create a level area.

### 10.4 Stage 4 – Roads, Parking & Clean up

The entry point is the existing open access to the site therefore no new connection is required. A new parking area will be created to provide a private parking area for guests only. This will be formed of a permeable material such as crushed stone chippings. As the existing access is formed to the correct standards, there will be no risk of loose material spilling out onto the public road.

Finally, a total clear-out of the site will be done to ensure no leftover waste from the build stage is left. All cleaning waste will be recycled where possible and safely disposed of otherwise.

## 11.0 Sustainability

The proposal will offer an economic stimulus in the area.

The units are manufactured and designed to be energy efficient with well-insulated floors and fully insulated walls with the use of materials with a low life cycle environmental impact where possible, double glazing will be utilized. LED light fittings are installed as standard throughout the glamping unit. Water will be provided by a mains connection. Underfloor heating will be used to heat the glamping pods, where applicable. Water-saving sanitary fittings and appliances within the units to deliver water efficiency to the site. The minimal surface water run-off from the pods will discharge into pebble borders around the units, additionally all paths and parking areas will be formed of permeable material.

Appropriate implementation of measures to minimise environmental impacts arising from any site works; the site will be constructed with efficient construction methods as stated in Stage 3 above thus reducing any waste and earthworks will result in no removals from the site required.

An efficient operational waste management and recycling strategy will be carried out by the operator as required by the Aylesbury Vale Council. The waste and recycling station is located in the parking area for ease of access by guests. The bins will then be moved to the roadside by the site operators on collection days.

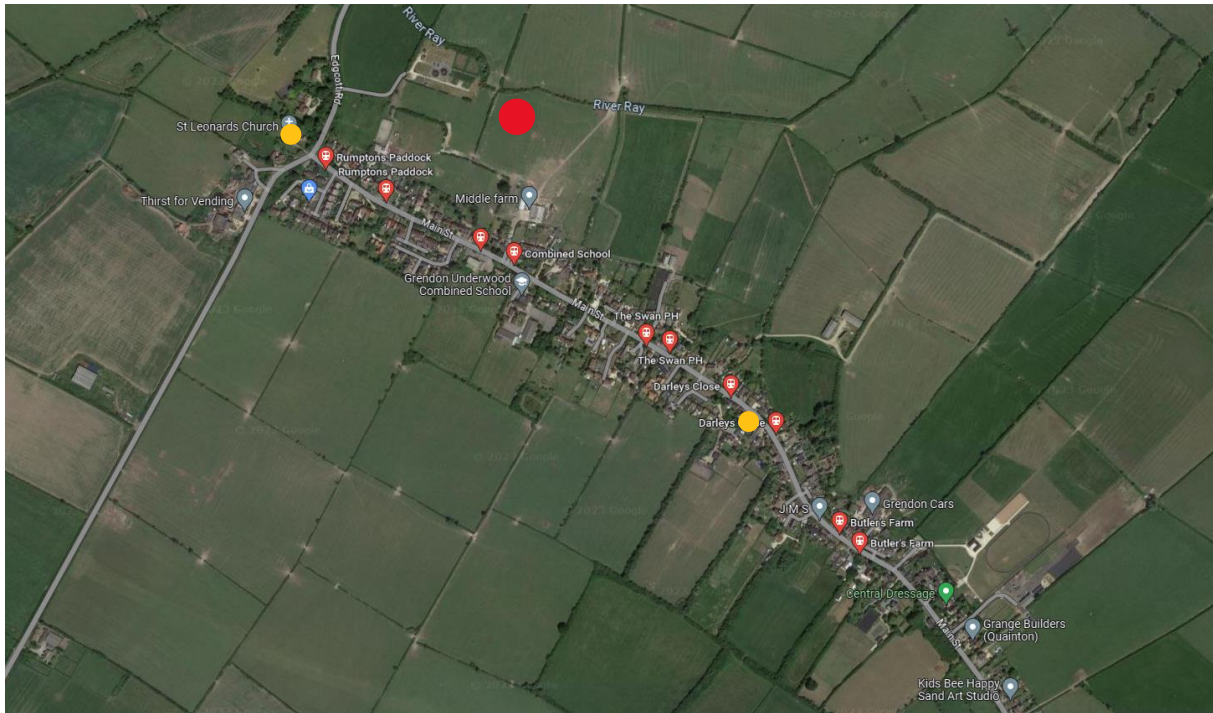
### 11.1 – Sustainable transport

Bike storage will be provided for guests to encourage the use of bikes during their stay, allowing less reliance on the private car when visiting local attractions and facilities. Additionally, electric car charging bays are proposed in the parking area to accommodate for electric vehicles.

The site is well situated near existing public transport links such as the local bus routes. An existing public bus stop is approximately 15m from the site access, providing guests with frequent access to the centre of Aylesbury and Bicester.



*Figure 11 – Bus stop (seen to the left) adjacent to the existing site access.*



*Figure 12 – Aerial map of the village with markers.*

Above is a map detailing the bus stops within the village, with 'The Swan PH' being the closest one to the site for guests to use. The site has been marked by a red circle. Also marked on the map are features of the village that guests can utilise during their stay without the need for transport. Shown on the map by a yellow marker is St Leonards Church and the local Premier convenience store and post office. Just outside the village, not shown on the map above, is the Greedy Pig Café which again is easily accessible by guests via foot.

The nearest train stations are Aylesbury Vale Parkway, Bicester Village, and Bicester North. With the nearest bus stop right next to the site access, guests will be able to make their way to the nearest train stations and utilise the bus services to complete their journey.

## 12.0 - Flood Risk

It has been identified from the Government Flood Maps that the proposed site lies within a low probability of flooding of surface water, and a low risk of flooding from rivers and seawater.

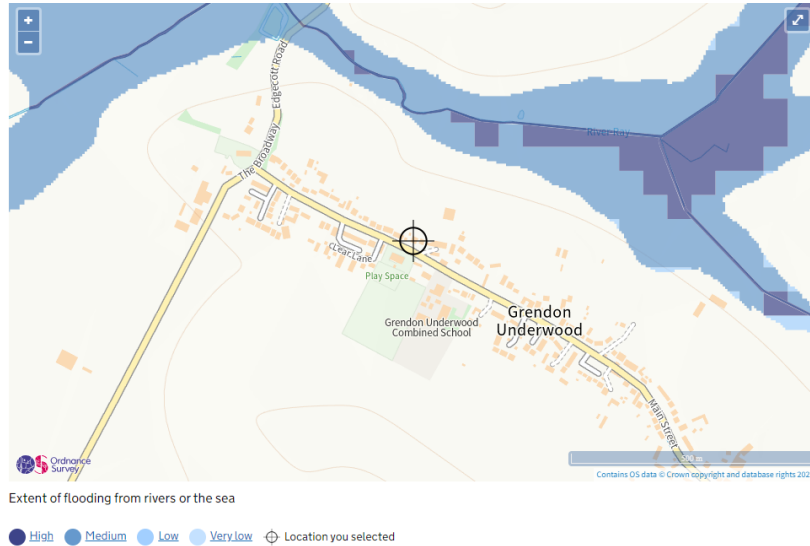


Figure 13 –Government flood map of rivers and sea flooding.



Figure 14 –Government flood map of Surface water flooding.

The proposed development will not create any further risk of flooding and therefore would not require an FRA to be carried out.

## 13.0 Summary

The proposed glamping site will provide a new and modern accommodation option to the Aylesbury. Demand for this type of accommodation is high throughout the country, which has also been shown to be true of other glamping sites within the UK.

This development will increase footfall for local businesses and through correct marketing, should increase the length of time tourists remains in the area. With a high presence of tourists visiting the surrounding area, the site will be well situated to provide new luxury accommodation to cater for their needs. This will be beneficial for local tourist attractions, restaurants and businesses etc.

The construction of a glamping site in this location can be achieved in less time, with less intrusive construction methods and less environmental impact, than traditional luxury accommodation builds require. Allowing the site to revert to its original use once the development has reached the end of its lifetime, this is clearly favourable in an area of countryside rich in natural beauty.

Based on the points discussed above, it is reasonable to suggest that glamping accommodation is warranted in this location, to cater to increasing visitor demand, without sacrificing the area's beauty or ecology.

As previously mentioned, this site will be part of a farm diversification project to help provide an additional income that will help sustain the future of Middle Farm.

The operator intends to build on existing relationships they have with other local businesses in the area to offer their goods and services to the guests, including shops, pubs and restaurants to name but a few. The operator will be promoting these services within the glamping unit along with providing the guests with local knowledge of the many beauty spots to visit.