



STANFORDS

Great Oakley Lodge Farm  
Harwich Road  
Great Oakley

Change of use of land to tourism and leisure use to accommodate six holiday units and associated parking.

Planning Statement, Heritage Impact Assessment and Tourism Appraisal.

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## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Mr Spurge and is submitted in support for a full planning application for the change of use of land to tourism and leisure use to accommodate six holiday units and associated parking on land at Great Oakley Lodge Farm, Harwich Road, Great Oakley, CO12 5AE.

1.2 This statement should be treated as forming part of the application, and includes details of the site and its surroundings, the intended use and how it relates to adopted planning policies.

## **2.0 Site and Surroundings**

2.1 The site is located at the end of Harwich Road, just before the lane meets Lodge Farm and Great Oakley Airfield surrounded by 300 acres of land owned by the applicant. The topography positions the site at a slightly higher elevation than the village itself, with undulating farmland surrounding. The site's current use is agricultural land; however, the juxtaposition of the farmyard, airfield, existing dwellings, and boundaries has rendered the land subject to this application awkward and restricted to farm.

2.2 Harwich Road is a private lane owned by the applicant extending from the B1414 which runs through the village, with approximately 450m of the lane shared with public right of way no.11. There are multiple opportunities for passing vehicles along Harwich Road which is softened by elements of landscaping.

2.3 The nearest unrelated neighbouring property known as 'Newfarm House' is 150m east of the application site. The applicant resides in Great Oakley Lodge Farmhouse 60m west of the application site which is Grade II listed (UID: 1112134). There is also a barn 30m north of the farmhouse which is Grade II listed separated from the application site by an aircraft hangar building (UID: 1147255).

### 3.0 Relevant Planning History

3.1 There is no relevant planning history relating to this application site.

### 4.0 Policy Context

#### National Planning Policy

4.1 Section 6 of the NPPF discusses at length the way planning can influence building a strong, competitive economy. Paragraph 81 states that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

4.2 In relation to the rural economy, paragraph 84 highlights that planning policies and decisions should enable (a) the sustainable growth of all types of businesses in rural areas with well-designed new buildings (b) the development and diversification of land-based rural businesses and (c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside. Paragraph 85 further recognises that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found beyond existing settlements. In order to mitigate potential impact, the development must be sensitive to its surroundings and does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads.

#### Local Planning Policy

4.3 The vision statement contained within the Tendring District Local Plan (2022) adopted earlier this year aims that the District will be a vibrant, healthy and attractive place to live, work and visit. It will have a thriving, resilient and prosperous economy that promotes sustainable economic growth and popularity as a visitor destination. Objective 2 focuses on employment delivery to create the conditions for economic growth and employment opportunities across a range of sectors. Objective 10 is clear that the Council aim to work with partners to provide an enhanced environment for tourism.

- 4.4 The Cultural, Visitor and Tourism sector encompasses a range of activities which play an important role in the District's economy. This sector is worth more than £353 million per annum to the economy and is estimated to provide 7,900 jobs across Tendring District. Figures from the Economic Strategy 2019 show that tourism employment has grown by 35% over the last five years. This has in part, been driven by the actions promoted in the Tendring Tourism Strategy 2010-16. The countryside in the District is one of its key assets in terms of tourism, as stated within paragraph 3.1.4.5 of the Local Plan (2022).
- 4.5 The site is located outside of the defined settlement boundary for Great Oakley. In general terms, development outside of defined Settlement Development Boundaries will be the subject of strict control to protect and enhance the character and openness of the countryside. However, there are certain forms of development that can and sometimes need to take place in these areas, some of which can bring about positive outcomes for the rural economy (paragraph 3.3.3.1).
- 4.6 Policy SPL3 of the newly adopted Local Plan requires all new development to be of a design which makes a positive contribution to the quality of the local environmental and protect or enhance local character. The specific criteria contained within the policy that need to be met include, inter alia:-
- a. new buildings, alterations and structures are well designed and maintain or enhance local character and distinctiveness;
  - b. the development relates well to its site and surroundings particularly in relation to its siting, height, scale, massing, form, design and materials;
  - c. the development respects or enhances local landscape character, views, skylines, landmarks, existing street patterns, open spaces and other locally important features;
  - d. the design and layout of the development maintains or enhances important existing site features of landscape, ecological, heritage or amenity value; and
  - e. boundary treatments and hard and soft landscaping are designed as an integral part of the development reflecting the function and character of the development and its surroundings. The Council will encourage the use of locally distinctive materials and/or locally occurring and characteristic hedge species.

The policy further examines the need for all new development to meet functional requirements. Planning permission will only be granted if the criteria contained within Policy SPL3 are met or can be shown not to apply to the proposed development. These criteria are as follows:

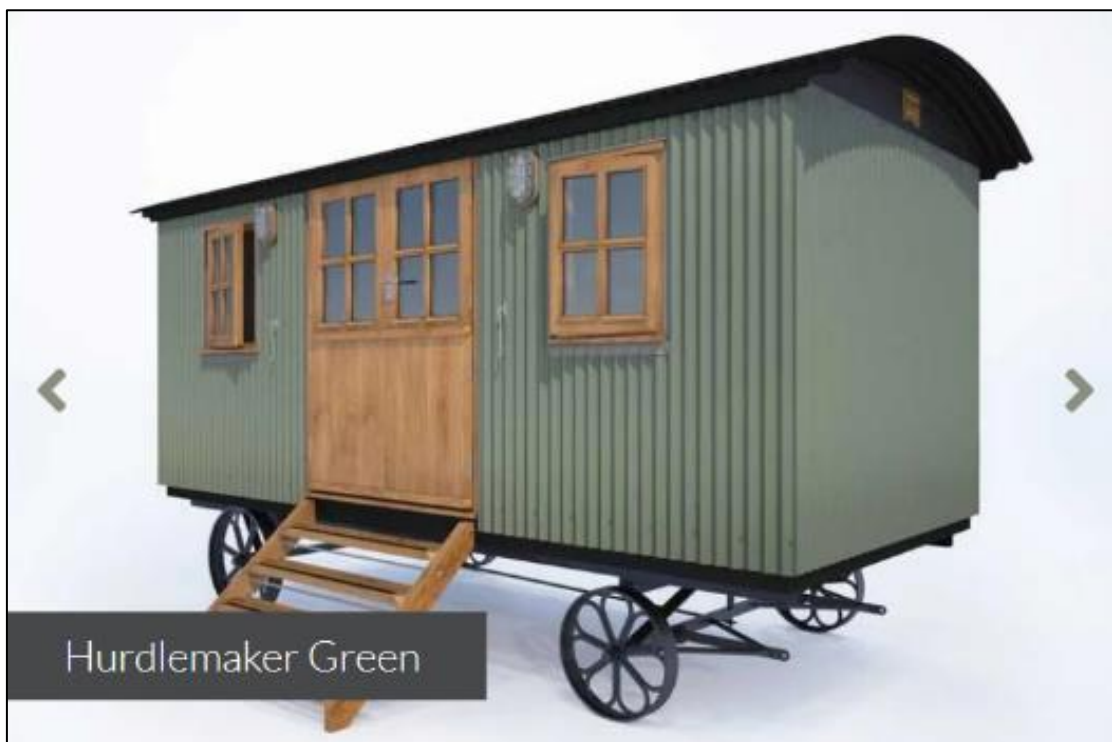
- a. access to the site is practicable and the highway network will, following any required mitigation, be able to safely accommodate the additional traffic the proposal will generate and not lead to severe traffic impact;
- b. the design and layout of the development maintains and/or provides safe and convenient access for people with mobility impairments;
- c. the development incorporates or provides measures to minimise opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour;
- d. the applicant/developer can demonstrate how the proposal will minimise the production of greenhouse gases and impact on climate change as per the Building Regulations prevailing at the time and policies and requirements in this plan;
- e. buildings and structures are designed and orientated to ensure adequate daylight, outlook and privacy for future and existing residents;
- f. provision is made for adequate private amenity space, waste storage and recycling facilities, vehicle and cycle parking; and
- g. the development reduces flood risk and integrates sustainable drainage within the development, creating amenity and enhancing biodiversity.

4.7 Policy PP8 sets criteria for tourism within the District. The Council will generally support proposals that would help improve the tourism appeal of the area to visitors. Priority 3 and 4 for tourism and leisure in the District is to enhance the visitor economy and experience, including self-catering accommodation, as well as making positive use of the District's countryside to promote activities such as walking, cycling and bird watching (paragraph 6.6.1.2). Another important aspect of promoting Tendring District's tourism economy will be to ensure that the District offers a range of visitor accommodation in different locations that will appeal to different people's tastes, budgets and interests. As the nature of tourism has changed so much over the years, Tendring District cannot rely purely on the provision of traditional holiday accommodation provided at seaside holiday parks, hotels, guesthouses and bed & breakfasts. Increasingly people will visit Tendring District for short weekend breaks, to visit friends and family, to attend weddings and other family functions or even for business purposes (paragraph 6.6.1.4).

- 4.8 Policy PP13 assesses the influence of the rural economy in meeting the vision and objectives for the District. Whilst the thrust of both local and national policy is to direct new jobs to existing built up areas and centres of employment, it is recognised that the District's rural areas and open countryside also make an important contribution to the overall economy of the District and so the Council should seek to achieve sustainable economic growth of its rural economy. It is also acknowledged that the District's rural areas and countryside are used for certain activities that need to take place in these areas, some of which can bring about positive outcomes for the rural economy and so the Council will support proposals for appropriate development in the countryside that would help strengthen the rural economy.
- 4.9 The Tendring District Tourism Strategy 2021-2026 discusses the vital role tourism plays for the local economy, with growth in this sector by £115 million since 2010. The drivers in developing the tourism strategy are by increasing the volume and value of tourism, improving and consolidating existing markets and exploiting new markets and the delivery of the strategy must account for available resources, so innovation is paramount. Emphasis is on the conversion of day trip visitors into overnight staying visitors to maximise economic gain for the District and local businesses. Part of the 10 Point Plan to ensure these aims are met includes working with private sector tourism providers to support job creation and raise the profile of the District as a destination for walking, cycling and other outdoor rural activities.
- 4.10 When assessing the evidence base for the Tendring Economic Strategy 2020-24, tourism employment is 1.3 times more concentrated when compared to the national average, with around 5,000 jobs. This sector is highlighted as a core sector strength of the District and has seen one of the most significant growths in terms of job creation, with the benefit of new development proposals supporting this upward trajectory. The evidence base shows that these locations are largely focused on the coastal locations, showing potential growth opportunities for inland small-scale rural tourism sites.

## 5.0 Proposed Development

- 5.1 The proposal is to locate six self-contained holiday units within the application site; two north of Harwich Road, three to the south, and one adjacent to the existing clubhouse, set amongst soft landscaping. It is proposed to use Plankbridge's 'The Cabin' which is a Shepards hut design constructed on a chassis. The dimensions of each unit are approximately 6.2m x 2.4m and are accessed from side elevation via chestnut steps followed by oak double stable doors. Flanking the entrance are two casement windows also constructed in oak. The structures have a traditional Shepards hut curved roof and are externally finished with corrugated iron. It is proposed to use either Plankbridge green or hurdlemaker green in terms of colour. The total floor space is approximately 89m<sup>2</sup>. Please find enclosed with this submission visuals and drawings to this effect for information only.





- 5.2 Each holiday unit is equipped with an en suite and kitchenette. There are no windows on the side elevations which could cause overlooking into other holiday units at the application site. The Shepards huts are constructed by hand using a modern timber frame. The 75mm timber frame is sheathed in structural OSB 2 boarding, wrapped in breather membrane, insulated with British Thermafleece sheep's wool, and lined with vapour barrier which contributes to a comfortable, warm, and dry environment. The internal wall lining is stable V grooved sheeting, achieving the look of traditional match-boarding with no knots or shrinkage. These details have been carefully crafted by Plankbridge and the high-quality design aligns with the applicants aims for the project. The following is a statement of the history of the company:

*Years of hut making (we made our first hut over two decades ago) and having delivered many huts around the UK, Europe and even the USA this amounts to unrivalled experience, which we channel into every hut build. Plankbridge is at the forefront of the shepherd's hut revival. Commentators have said that this was really triggered by our appearance on BBC TV Countryfile in 2011 with John Craven, and then our Artisan shepherd's hut garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2012 which featured in many design-led magazines in the UK and around the World. We remain strongly influenced by the best Victorian hut makers, whose craftsmanship and design informs the contemporary huts we make today. Our furniture makers have worked in some of the famous Dorset workshops, and we treat each hut as if it were in effect a large piece of furniture, a cabinet on wheels!*



*Richard trained at international furniture designer John Makepeace's Hooke Park College back in the early '90's, which at the time was geared to training 'entrepreneurs in wood'. We are also very keen on the Arts and Crafts philosophy of John Ruskin and William Morris and have spent many years building a happy team and nurturing apprentice hut makers. We are the only shepherd's hut makers to be endorsed by the RHS – the Royal Horticultural Society (the RHS) in recognition of our quality and experience.*

- 5.3 The site has the benefit of an existing access from the B1414 which serves the farm, the airfield and two residential dwellings. There are at least four passing areas along the lane, and it is proposed to utilise an existing area of hardstanding on the northern side of the lane, south of the solar panels. There is adequate space for five parking spaces; one to serve each unit. There is also one parking space proposed for the sixth unit adjacent to the clubhouse as shown on the submitted plan. There is a clear 6m area rear of the parking spaces to ensure that turning capacity is adequate to re-enter Harwich Road in a forward gear. These parking spaces are located adjacent to the northern units, with between a 25m to 100m walking distance for guests to the holiday units shown dashed on the submitted plan. The connection with the adopted highway B1414 is within the 30mph speed limit zone. Visibility splays of 2.4m x 90m can be achieved in both directions.
- 5.4 The units would be used for holiday purposes only and would be associated in conjunction with the farm holding. There would be no use of amplified music which could cause noise and disturbance to the host property and the wider landscape. The small-scale nature of the development will avoid any parties or noise generation which would compromise the serenity of the countryside. There is no external flood lighting proposed which would cause light pollution. The units would have the benefit of electricity and water from a local source, whilst a Klargester BioDisc Package Treatment Plant would operate satisfactorily in this location.
- 5.5 Proposed landscaping is at the heart of this scheme; it was imperative to the applicant that the submission includes a range of native planting to provide a range of benefits including softening of the development, offering an element of privacy to guests and screening from Harwich Road and associated uses within the existing yard. The main body of land does not contain any trees or other significant vegetation. Approximately 180m of

*Crataegus monogyna* (Hawthorn) hedgerow is proposed along Harwich Road to the north and south and elements to the western boundary of the application site adjacent to the existing uses. This would be planted as a double row with planting at 450mm centres with each row offset and a stock size of 450mm-600mm. The planting of this single species quick-thorn is a traditional form of field hedgerow planting. The following trees will be planted with a stock size of 900mm-1200mm to both enhance local landscape character and help filter screen the development at maturity:

- *Quercus robur* (oak)
- *Betula pendula* (silver birch)
- *Acer campestre* (field maple)



Figure 1: Left to right – *Quercus robur*, *Betula pendula* and *Acer campestre*.

5.6 Interspersed with the tree and hedgerow planting, there will also be shrubs planted including *Prunus laurocerasus* (laurel), *Rosaceae photinia* (red robin) and *Ilex aquifolium* (holly) with a stock size of 500mm-700mm. Please find a landscaping plan attached within the submission.



Figure 2: Left to right – *Prunus laurocerasus*, *Rosaceae photinia* and *Ilex aquifolium*.

## 6.0 Heritage Impact Assessment

- 6.1 The applicant resides in Great Oakley Lodge Farmhouse 60m west of the application site which is Grade II listed (UID: 1112134). There is also a barn 30m north of the farmhouse which is Grade II listed separated from the application site by an aircraft hangar building (UID: 1147255). The Official List entries read as follows:

### Great Oakley Lodge Farmhouse

*GV II House. Circa 1600, extended in C18 and early C19. Timber framed, part weatherboarded, part plastered, and partly of red brick in Flemish bond, roofed with handmade red clay tiles. Main range of two or three bays aligned approximately north-south. C18 crosswing to north, with internal stack at west end and external stack at east end. Lean-to extension in south east angle, forming a catslide with the crosswing roof, partly roofed with slate. Early C19 extension to south, wholly of red brick, with an internal stack at the junction, and C20 lean-to conservatory to the south of it. C19 single-storey extension to the west, altered in C20. Mainly two storeys, south extension of two storeys with attic in gambrel roof. North elevation weatherboarded; ground floor, two early C19 sashes of sixteen lights, first floor two early C19 sashes of twelve lights, with some crown glass. Central half-glazed door with flat canopy on C19 cast iron stanchions. The east elevation has an early C19 facade of red brick. The original north-south range has jowled posts, a chamfered binding beam with chamfered joists of horizontal section, all with plain stops, a clasped purlin roof, and an original winder stair with at the top turned balusters and a moulded handrail.*

### Barn 30m north of Great Oakley Lodge

*GV II Barn. C18. Timber framed, weatherboarded, approximately half roofed with corrugated iron, half with corrugated asbestos. Seven bays aligned approximately north-south with midstrey to east. Lean-to extension in southeast angle. Hardwood frame, jointed and pegged. Primary straight bracing. Face-halved and bladed scarfs in wallplates. Clasped purlin roof. The half roofed with asbestos was thatched until c.1980.*

- 6.2 The NPPF definition of 'significance' states that in the planning context heritage interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. The historic definition relevant in this instance is 'an interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only

provide a material record of our nation's history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity'.

6.3 In terms of the setting of a heritage asset, the NPPG states that 'the extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual relationship between the asset and the proposed development and associated visual/physical considerations.'

6.4 Paragraph 202 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including where appropriate securing its optimum viable use.

6.5 Tendring District Local Plan (2022) Policy PPL9 states that '*Proposals for new development affecting a listed building or its setting will only be permitted where they will protect its special architectural or historic interest, its character, appearance and fabric. Where a proposal will cause harm to a listed building, the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF should be applied dependent on the level of harm caused. Proposals will be treated favourably where they:*

*a. are explained and justified through an informed assessment and understanding of the significance of the heritage asset (including any contribution made to that significance by its setting); and*

*b. are of a scale, design and use materials and finishes that respect the significance of the listed building (including any contribution made to that significance by its setting).'*

6.6 In this instance, it is important to assess 1) the visual relationship between the heritage assets and the holiday units 2) the proposed external materials and 3) public benefits. By nature of the Shepards hut design and size, bisection from the site by the aircraft hangar building to the north of the site and public right of way to the south, as well as the proposed landscaping scheme, the holiday units will be well screened from the heritage assets whilst

not being seen in isolation. The use of corrugated iron in a suitable shade of green would be sympathetic and would not compete with the red brick, weatherboarding and plaster forming the external appearance of the heritage assets.

6.7 It can be concurred that there is no impact on the significance or setting of the heritage assets. However, in the event that the Authority deem a less than substantial harm, this should be weighed against public benefits. In this instance, there is a range of public benefits that could arise from the enabling of the development. For example, members of the public would be able to stay overnight in what feels like a remote location just a stone's throw from the centre of the village. The footpaths are often enjoyed by locals and this proposal would encourage those from further afield to participate too, fulfilling the social aspect of public benefits. In terms of economic benefits, this would encourage spending in the local area at the community public house, local store and events venues with an increased opportunity for overnight stays following big celebrations. The proposal would also employ four local people. Environmentally, there is a substantial level of landscaping proposed which would produce in excess of a 10% biodiversity net gain. It is therefore considered that if a less than substantial harm is identified in this instance, this can be weighed in the balance of the public benefits of the proposal.

## 7.0 Tourism Appraisal

7.1 Since the pandemic, the rise of staycations in the UK has been exponential. Data from AirDNA, the world's most trusted resource for holiday rental research, state that self-catering accommodation in the UK cost 41% more in August 2021 than it did in 2019. This has helped boost the tourism economy and plays a major role in the local economy of Tendring District. A secondary effect of this is job generation, with 18% of locals employed in this sector, equating to 9000 jobs. This small-scale scheme would see the employment of 2 full time members of staff, with approximately 2 part-time staff members to aid the running of the holiday units.

7.2 There are a number of local attractions which are pull factors to the area. Located in the countryside, the visitors will have the benefit of utilising the series of well-connected public footpaths for dog walking running directly adjacent to the site. These connect the site with the centre of Great Oakley, through Little Oakley to Harwich and Dovercourt and south towards Thorpe-le-Soken. Where the lane meets the B1414, there is a formal footway into the village; the nearest bus stops are 260m west. Services provided from these bus stops are Nos.102 & 104 connecting the area with services everyday to Colchester, Ardleigh, Dedham, Lawford, Manningtree, Mistley, Dovercourt, Parkston and Harwich. This would reduce the need for private car use for visitors staying at the site. Despite the countryside location, the site is well connected to local facilities and promotes the use of public transport, walking and cycling.

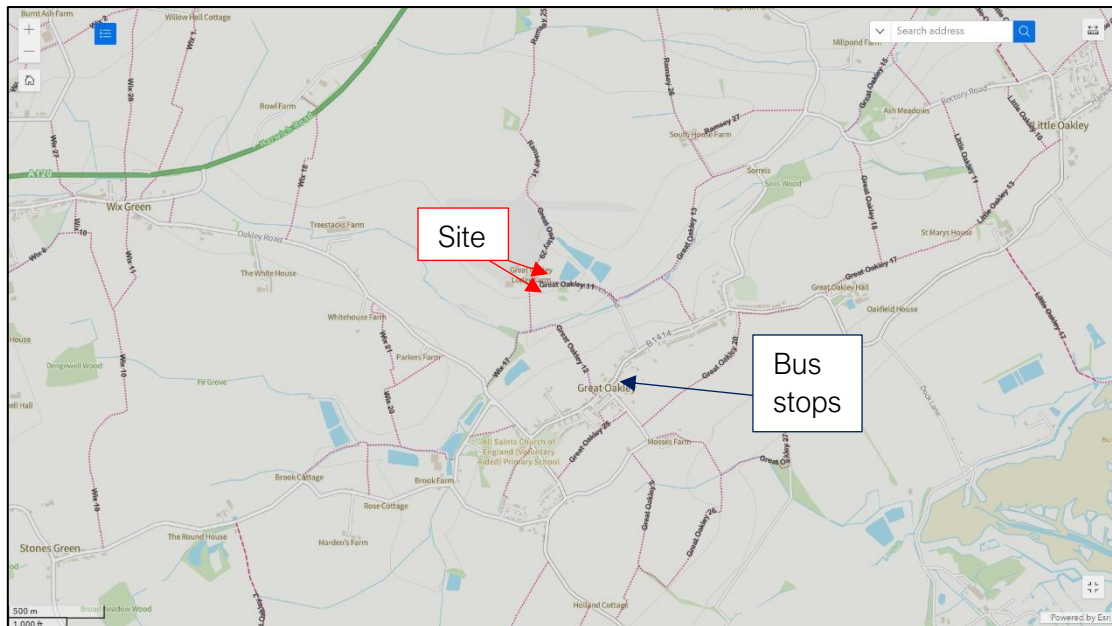


Figure 3: ECC Highways Public Right of Way maps.

7.3 Great Oakley has the benefit of a community public house, a local store, village hall, All Saints church, and Richwill Farm, the three latter locations are each event and wedding venues. Guests visiting these events from further afield would have the benefit of accommodation in the immediate proximity to the venues less than 1 mile or a 30-minute walk away. With the use of the site also as an airfield, the proposal offers an opportunity for pilots and crew members to stay overnight between flights.

7.4 Harwich old town lies just five miles to the east, with its Napoleonic Fort (The Redoubt) an historic Naval links. It is also the basin of the Stour and Orwell rivers, with Felixstowe Container Port opposite, and the Hook of Holland Ferry Terminal at Parkston Quay. A simple search of the general area on Airbnb shows no alternative offering in this vicinity for self-contained holiday units.



Figure 4: AirBnB map.

7.5 It can therefore be deduced that there is little in the way of overnight stays in this location despite adequate facilities within the village to supply visitors and opportunities for travel elsewhere within the district via public transport methods without a reliance on private vehicles.

## 8.0 Conclusions

8.1 In conclusion, the change of use of land for the purposes of tourism and leisure use has been 1) designed sympathetically to the heritage assets in the vicinity with the use of the Plankbridge Shepards huts, 2) carefully considered in terms of soft landscaping to screen the development and produce a biodiversity net gain and 3) utilises existing hardstanding to offer as a parking area, reducing traffic in and out of the farmyard and airfield. The materials used are what one would expect to see in the countryside and the level of construction by a British specialist company can only be considered high-quality. There

are key offerings the village provides to constitute increased overnight stay accommodation and the public benefits of the scheme are clear.