

STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION

April 2023

Introduction

The application site is located within a designated countryside location, between the settlements of Hunston and Sidlesham on the busy B2145. The site is situated on a main road with a regular bus route linking the site to Selsey and Chichester.

Sidlesham is characterised by the spacious Land Share Association plots which now include a variety of uses having evolved over time from their original horticultural purpose. This part of Street End Lane is characterised by sporadic residential development of individual houses in a linear pattern, fronting the highway mixed with several original horticultural worker dwellings. The site is currently occupied by redundant glasshouses with disused scrub land to the rear. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and as such is at the lowest risk of flooding. There are no other site-specific constraints.

This statement has been prepared by the owners. It sets out and explains the need for lodges for tourism purposes on the site.

Tourism

Tourism plays a key role in Chichester District's economy. According to Visit England data, tourism produces the following in Chichester District:

- 5.2 million day trips each year generating spending of £144 million.
- 405,000 'staying' trips each year, equating to 1.3 million 'bed nights', and generating spending of £75 million.
- c. 7,500 jobs in tourism and leisure, plus numerous 'support' jobs

The Southeast attracts the highest tourism spend for any region outside London. In Chichester District, tourism and leisure generates significant direct expenditure and is the largest private sector employer.

In every area of the UK, staying visitors spend significantly more within a local economy than day visitors and help underpin the viability of associated businesses such as transport, entertainment, catering and retailing.

The Local Plan accepts that there is a need for overnight tourist accommodation in the District. Moreover, as set out in the Visitor Accommodation Need Assessment ("VANA"), the draft Local Plan Preferred Approach adopts the same position, restating and confirming that Chichester

has insufficient visitor accommodation relative to the number of tourists who wish to visit and stay in the area.

The VANA, at Section 3 sets out existing tourist provision in the District and explains that although the majority of rooms and bedspaces within the District are in the non-serviced accommodation sector, campsites account for the vast majority of these (24,836 bedspaces) with self-catered holiday homes comprising less than 3% of available space.

There are two important points arising from this. First, there is a very clear imbalance in local provision with inadequate provision for holiday home accommodation. Second, the campsites provide seasonal accommodation and do not, therefore, contribute to a year-round tourist season, which is a clear objective of the Local Plan.

In terms of qualitative supply, the VANA sets out (at Table 2) that 71% of hotel provision is graded between 1* and 3* with 5* accommodation only accounting for 2% of overall supply. Accordingly, it is clear that there is a further imbalance in qualitative terms, with a disproportionate number of poorer quality, economy-focussed visitor accommodation.

The inadequacy of supply of overnight accommodation is further evidence in the VANA, which sets out that occupancy across June and July 2022 was almost 84% and is well ahead of the 5-year average of 67%.

The VANA sets out very strong, compelling and up-to-date data which supports the Council's own evidence and shows that not only is there an insufficient amount of accommodation to meet needs, but the accommodation which exists is heavily skewed towards campsite accommodation (which fails to provide a year-round tourist season) and of the hotel accommodation provided in the District, approaching three quarters is graded between 1* and 3*.

It is evident, therefore, that there is significant need for the type of accommodation proposed in this application. The holiday units proposed will both significantly increase the proportion of 5* accommodation in the District while allowing for a year-round tourist season, in accordance with the objectives of CLP Policy 30.

Rural Justification

The need for a rural location is demonstrated by two principal matters. First by the specific nature of the development, which cannot be delivered in the confines of any of the District's settlements. Secondly, by the number and range of tourist attractions located within easy reach of the site.

The development proposed comprises the redevelopment of a former horticultural site to provide tourist accommodation in the form of holiday units. The vision and aspiration for the development is that it delivers a tranquil, wellbeing accommodation, where they can relax and unwind and natural surroundings and escape the stress of daily life. As a concept, this cannot work in an urban or developed environment, it can only be delivered successfully in a rural location.

Impact on the local economy

A fundamental aim of the NPPF is to support development which stimulates economic growth, particularly in rural areas with paragraph 84 specifically encouraging that decisions on planning applications enable the growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, including in respect of tourism and leisure developments.

One of the cornerstone objectives of the Council's economic development policies is to focus economic growth through an expanded and enhanced tourism industry. This industry attracts inward investment, creates employment and increased local spend. One of the challenges to this is the lack of sufficient tourist accommodation with the Council's evidence showing that there are insufficient facilities which keep tourists in the District overnight. Moreover, as addressed above, the majority of the accommodation available in the District is seasonal, which fails to attract year-round use.

CLP Policy 3 deals with the economy and employment provision and sets out to support the Council's overarching vision of boosting the local tourist industry to create jobs and economic growth. Associated with this is Policy 30, which in the context of rural tourist accommodation development, requires that development support rural regeneration and diversification, moving away from traditional land-based industries to create new sustainable employment opportunities.

It is evident from this that the proposed development will have a small, but essential impact on the District's economy, creating a number and range of jobs in a rural area and, in accordance with CLP Policy 30, supporting the key objective of rural regeneration and diversification.

The proposed development attracts very considerable support from CLP Policy 3. The development will make a significant contribution to the Council's objectives for economic growth and the benefits of this should carry very substantial weight in the planning balance.