



# PLANNING STATEMENT

In respect of a planning application for the use of land  
for the siting of 2no. shepherds huts for use as holiday  
lets at:

Poplar Farm, Heath Road, Hollesley, IP12 3NA

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is prepared in support of an application for the siting of 2 no. shepherds huts to provide holiday let accommodation at Poplar Farm, Heath Road, Hollesley.
- 1.2 It will consider the planning policy position and provide an overview of the relevant material considerations relating to the proposed development.
- 1.3 The extract below shows the location of the site relative to nearby development and to the village of Hollesley.



Image 1: Location Plan

- 1.4 Alongside this statement, the application is accompanied by plans prepared by Tim Moll Architect which provide details of the shepherds huts, their siting on the land and the associated parking area. The application is also supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which addresses the ecological and biodiversity impacts of the proposal.

## **2.0 The Site**

- 2.1 Poplar Farm is a detached dwelling located to the north of Hollesley, off Heath Road. To the north of the dwelling is the Poplar Farm Equestrian Training Centre and a number of associated outbuildings, which is operated by the applicant's wife. A private track serves Poplar Farm which runs off the access serving the Equestrian Training Centre and Poplar Farm Cottages.
- 2.2 The site itself is located to the southeast of the dwellinghouse. It is bound by mature trees and vegetation along its southern boundary. The surrounding area is largely rural countryside, however there are a number of residential dwellings to the southeast which form the outskirts of Hollesley Village.
- 2.3 The land does not fall within a Conservation Area and lies entirely in Flood Zone 1. Neither Poplar Farm nor the adjacent buildings are listed.
- 2.4 The site is positioned within the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and adjacent to Lower Hollesley Common.

## **3.0 The Proposal**

- 3.1 The application seeks planning permission for use of the site for the siting of 2 no. shepherd huts and associated parking facilities. The shepherds huts are proposed to be used as holiday let accommodation and would be offered as accommodation that could be utilised in association with the Poplar Farm Equestrian Centre.
- 3.2 The proposed block plan shows where the shepherds huts would be set out on the site. These are located within easy walking distance of the equestrian facility and would enable access to a wide range of footpaths and bridleways in the vicinity of the site.

3.3 A parking area will also be provided for use by occupiers of the shepherds hut, and this would be situated just off the access, benefitting from direct access off the existing access track and containing parking a short distance from the huts.

3.4 Details of the proposed huts are included with the application. These would provide modest accommodation that would be occupied and available for holiday purposes only.

#### **4.0 Planning History**

4.1 There is no relevant planning history relating directly to this land.

#### **5.0 Planning Policy Context**

5.1 The revised National Planning Policy Framework was published in December 2023. It sets out the Government's planning policy and is a material consideration when determining planning applications.

5.2 The NPPF is supported by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which assists applicants and decision makers to interpret the NPPF.

5.3 The development plan for the former Suffolk Coastal area of East Suffolk Council comprises the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (SCLP). The following policies from the SCLP are considered relevant to this proposal:

- SCLP3.1 – Strategy for Growth
- SCLP6.1 – Tourism
- SCLP6.3 – Tourism Development Within the AONB and Heritage Coast
- SCLP6.5 – New Tourist Accommodation
- SCLP7.1 – Sustainable Transport
- SCLP7.2 – Parking Proposals and Standards
- SCLP10.1 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- SCLP10.4 – Landscape Character
- SCLP11.1 – Design Quality
- SCLP11.2 – Residential Amenity

5.4 Where relevant to the consideration of this proposal, these policies will be referred to within the ‘Planning Considerations’ section of this report.

## 6.0 Planning Considerations

### Principle of Development

6.1 Paragraph 10 of the NPPF states *“So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development”*.

6.2 The proposal seeks permission for the use of the site for tourism purposes, in the form of two shepherds huts to be let to holidaymakers. Occupiers will be able to access facilities in the equestrian facility and have access to bridleways in the locality of the site so as to be able to ride horses.

6.3 Paragraph 88 of the NPPF states that:

*“Planning policies and decisions should enable:*

*a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;*

*b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;*

*c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and*

*d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship”*.

6.4 Chapter 6 of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (SCLP) deals with tourism in the district. It notes that:

*“6.2 Tourism supports businesses, facilities, town centres and community life across the plan area. Destinations throughout the plan area are popular for holidays, overnight stays and with residents of the district, nearby areas and further afield. Sustainable growth in tourism can promote a better understanding and appreciation of the natural, built and historic environment, which in turn will help maintain these finite resources for future generations”*

and;

*“6.4 Tourism is an important part of the economy of the former Suffolk Coastal area, contributing 12% to total employment across the District in 2017. The Suffolk Coastal Economic Impact of Tourism Report 2017 identifies that over 6.3 million tourist trips were recorded generating a total of £325 million total tourism value across the plan area. The Ipswich Economic Area Sector Needs Assessment (2017) identifies that growth is expected to be seen within the ‘Hospitality and Leisure’ sector of the economy. Tourism is an important part of this sector reflecting both the cultural and natural environment across the plan area”.*

6.5 In recognising the contribution of tourism to the local economy, the SCLP includes specific policy provision for tourism development, even where this is proposed within the AONB, through the provisions of policies SCLP6.1 and SCLP6.3 respectively. Indeed, the importance of tourism to the AONB is expressed further in paragraphs 6.19 and 6.20 of the SCLP, which confirm that:

*“6.19 It is acknowledged in the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Management Plan of 2018 that development of sustainable tourism and Heritage Coast conservation is vitally important to the success of the tourism industry across the AONB. The value of the tourism economy to the AONB was nearly £200m in 2016 and supported over 4,000 jobs. The AONB Management Plan encourages new tourism development in the AONB, provided it is inclusive, sustainable and supports the conservation of the area.*

6.20 *Tourism can take many forms but within the AONB, the Local Plan will only support developments and proposals which are of a higher standard of design, that reduce the impacts on the environment, by where appropriate, reusing existing buildings and which satisfy the primary purpose of designation, that is to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB. Opportunities for innovative contemporary design are welcomed in appropriate locations within the AONB. The success of the tourism industry and the conservation of the AONB are not mutually exclusive. In this regard a supportive tourism strategy must acknowledge the importance of the scenic beauty and special landscape qualities of the AONB and the benefits associated with collaboration and communication between tourism businesses, visitors, local communities, and the AONB Partnership”.*

6.6 Policy SCLP6.1: Tourism seeks to support tourism in the district in a positive way and states that:

*“The Council will seek to manage tourism across the plan area in a way that protects the features that make the area attractive to visitors, and supports local facilities where the local road network has the capacity to accommodate the traffic generated from proposals.*

*Proposals which improve the visitor experience and support opportunities for year round tourism will be supported where increased tourism uses can be accommodated.*

*Proposals for tourist related development will be determined by the area’s capacity for further growth in the following locations:*

- a) The resorts of Felixstowe and Aldeburgh;*
- b) Market towns of Woodbridge, Framlingham, Saxmundham and Leiston;*
- c) The Heritage Coast environment which is of national significance;*
- d) The Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and*
- e) Rural areas across the rest of the District.*

*Applicants will be expected to undertake biodiversity and habitat assessments to ensure that any development of tourism related facilities does not conflict with environmental policies. Where appropriate the Council will support the introduction of local management solutions to*



*address any issues caused by tourism.”*

- 6.7 Policy SCLP6.3: Tourism Development deals with such uses within the AONB and Heritage Coast and states that:

*“Tourism development in the AONB, or its setting and Heritage Coast will be supported where it:*

- a) Enhances the long term sustainability of the area;*
- b) Is of a scale and extent that does not have a significant adverse impact on the primary purpose of the AONB designation;*
- c) Is well related to existing settlements and / or supporting facilities;*
- d) Avoids, prevents or mitigates for adverse impacts on the natural environment;*
- e) Supports the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB and its setting;*
- f) Is of the highest design standards and where appropriate reuses existing buildings;*
- g) Promotes innovative, contemporary design in appropriate locations;*
- h) Minimises light pollution from artificial light sources and ensures the retention of dark skies;*
- i) Avoids locations sensitive to the exposed nature of the AONB and Heritage Coast; and*
- j) Demonstrates sustainable aspects of the development during construction and throughout the life of the development. Renewable energy provision is strongly encouraged”.*

- 6.8 These policies provide a framework against which proposals seeking permission for tourist based development will be assessed. However, with particular regard to tourist accommodation in particular, policy SCLP6.5 is also relevant and states that:

*“Proposals for new tourist accommodation will be acceptable where:*

- a) The demand or need for tourist accommodation is clearly demonstrated;*
- b) They are of a high standard of design;*
- c) They are of a scale appropriate to the nature of the site and its setting;*
- d) They do not have a material adverse impact on the AONB or its setting, Heritage Coast or estuaries;*

- e) Covered cycle storage, proportionate to the size of the site is provided on site;*
- f) The road network is able to accommodate the volume of traffic generated without having a significant adverse impact on the free flow of traffic and highway safety;*
- g) Ancillary facilities to support the tourist uses are provided on the site where required;*
- and*
- h) Flood adaptation and mitigation measures are included where required.*

*Tourist accommodation comprising permanent buildings will only be permitted:*

- Within the Settlement Boundaries;*
- Through the conversion of buildings of permanent structure where they lie outside the Settlement Boundary;*
- On medium and large scale sites where commercial, recreational or entertainment facilities are provided on site; or*
- Where such development forms part of a comprehensive masterplan which supports wider landscape and ecological gain.*

*New tourist accommodation will be restricted by means of planning conditions or obligations in accordance with national policy for planning conditions and obligations which permit holiday use only, restricted to a continuous period of 56 days by one person or persons within one calendar year, plus require a register of all lettings, to be made available at all times.”*

6.9 These policies align with the aims of the NPPF, where paragraph 88 (as stated above) confirms that planning policies and decisions should support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.

6.10 The proposal is considered to comply with the provisions of policy SCLP6.5, as confirmed through the following assessment of the respective criteria.

***a) Demand/Need***

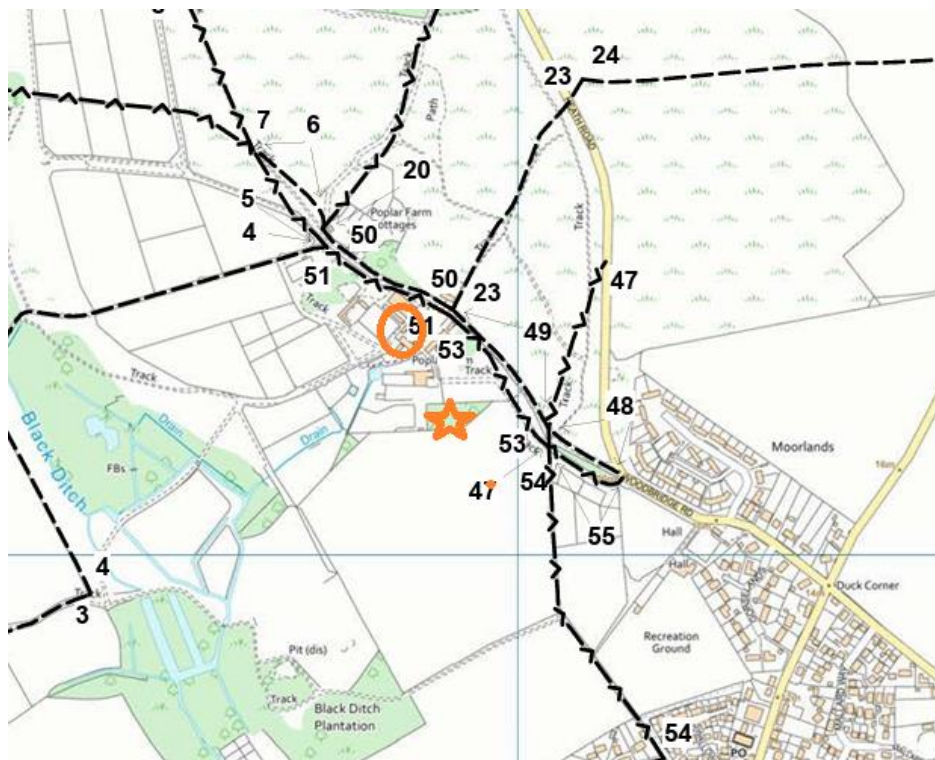
6.11 The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the hospitality and travel industry has been significant. However, contrary to the struggles that the industry faced during lockdown periods, which

stretched many months and across the peak season, there has been a significant upturn in demand for holiday lets in the UK and, as consumer confidence continues to grow, that demand is likely to continue to rise.

- 6.12 It is also well reported that UK campsites are currently experiencing a surge in bookings as more people plan staycations this summer, with local establishments now seeing tourists starting to return and many news reports highlighting the desirability of the Suffolk countryside for people coming out of London during the pandemic. That position also aligns with reports from Auto Trader, who recently confirmed that;

*“interest in online adverts for caravans was up nearly a fifth compared with the same time last year”.*

- 6.13 The applicant is not seeking to provide holiday accommodation on a wholly speculative basis. As operators of the adjacent equestrian facility, it is their intention to advertise holidays aligned to horse riding and offer opportunities for people of all levels of experience the chance to learn to ride and to utilise the nearby bridleways. The relationship of the site and equestrian centre to the network of paths and bridleways local to them is shown below (site shown by orange star, equestrian centre shown by orange circle)



6.14 The proposal would, thereby, support an existing and established business operated from the wider site. The applicant has experience of similar facilities where the accommodation has been very well supported, and is very confident that this will be utilised in a manner that will see it let for significant parts of the year also.

6.15 It is clear, therefore, that not only is there a recognised demand on the site, that there is likely to be a continued and increasing growth in this sector. As such, this element of policy SCLP6.5 has been complied with.

***b) High standard of design, c) Scale appropriate to setting and d) Impact on AONB or Heritage Coast***

6.16 Chapter 12 of the NPPF sets out the Government’s aims to achieve well-designed places. It states (paragraph 131) that:

*“The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.”*

6.17 The proposal is for two shepherds huts and associated parking. By virtue of the simple form and limited scale of the accommodation, these would sit comfortably in their setting and would not be visible from the public highway. The shepherds huts would compliment the surroundings, providing modest units of accommodation that are not permanent features and which add interest to the locality.

6.18 Policy SCLP11.1 also seeks to support locally distinctive and high quality design. It contains a number of criteria and is a long policy which addresses some matters that are not pertinent to this proposal given its generalised nature. However with regards to the relevant criteria, the following assessment of how the proposal meets these is provided.

- 6.19 The proposal seeks to deliver two shepherds huts that can easily be sited on the land without harm to any features of environmental interest. No harm to amenity is caused and the huts are sited some distance from any residential properties, providing separation that would preclude any disturbance from users.
- 6.20 The two shepherds huts would provide something different to the range of holiday lets available in the wider area local to the site, which includes campsites, lodges, bed and breakfast accommodation and hotels. It would provide modest accommodation for people to stay in the Suffolk countryside in shepherds huts which are of unique form and character.
- 6.21 The site is suitably landscaped such that the shepherds huts can be accommodated on the land without prominence in the wider landscape. They will be contained within/against existing trees and soft landscaping, precluding longer views and ensuring they are not silhouetted against the skyline.
- 6.22 As such, it is considered that the proposal complies with policy SCLP11.1, paragraph 131 of the NPPF and criteria b), c) and d) of policy SCLP6.5.

***e) Cycle storage***

- 6.23 Storage space is provided for cycles adjacent to each of the shepherds huts.

***f) Traffic/Road network***

- 6.24 There are no known capacity issues with the local highway network. The scale of the proposal would not generate significant visitor movements and suitable parking and turning space is facilitated on the site.

***g) Ancillary facilities***

- 6.25 The shepherds huts would have internalised toilet/shower facilities and therefore no additional buildings/structures are required to provide these.

## ***h) Flood risk***

- 6.26 The site lies within Flood Zone 1 and therefore flood risk is not a factor for this site and would not prevent additional accommodation being delivered here.
- 6.27 It is clear, therefore, that the proposal fully complies with the provisions of policy SCLP6.5 such that it should be supported.

## Sustainable Development

- 6.28 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF sets out three objectives to achieving sustainable development:

*“a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*

*b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and*

*c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy”.*

- 6.29 This proposal is considered to encompass all three of these objectives.
- 6.30 Economically, there are clear and demonstrable benefits resulting from the delivery of much needed tourism accommodation, as expressed earlier in this statement. Those occupying the shepherds huts would be highly likely to support other local communities and facilities

through expenditure at local facilities and services. There would be direct and indirect employment resulting from this facility, offering and supporting rural jobs, and the proposal would fully support the equestrian facility adjacent to the site. It is thereby economically sustainable.

- 6.31 From a social perspective, the use brings significant benefits from the opportunity for people to take holidays in the Suffolk countryside, to recreate and relax and to enjoy the local facilities at their leisure. The proposal would also generate additional/secure existing employment in this rural area, bringing social benefits through the support to local communities and the investment in the local area.
- 6.32 Environmentally, whilst it is clear that any holiday facilities such as this will require travel to and from them, the site is well located for walking, cycling and public transport. Significant facilities are available within a short distance of the site, including shops, nearby villages, tourist attractions, entertainment, recreation and public houses.
- 6.33 The proposal would make effective and efficient use of a parcel of underused land, and would be constructed to a high specification that would minimise waste and energy usage.
- 6.34 Overall, therefore, the proposal complies with all of the objectives of sustainable development and development plan policies aimed at securing increased tourism in the East Suffolk district.

## **7.0 Planning Balance**

- 7.1 The application seeks planning permission for a use of land that will encourage tourism and offer a pleasant and quiet holiday offer with good access to nearby facilities and services.
- 7.2 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The consideration is, therefore, whether the development accords with

the development plan and, if not, whether there are material considerations that would indicate a decision should be taken contrary to the development plan.

- 7.3 The development plan includes the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan. Specific policy provision is made, through policy SCLP6.5, for tourism accommodation such as this subject to certain criteria being met. That provision is also extended to tourist facilities in the AONB through policy SCLP6.3 such that this proposal is not objectionable as a matter of principle.
- 7.4 The site is well located and would be able to accommodate the development without giving rise to impacts on amenity, highway safety issues or a detrimental impact on the AONB landscape. The proposal brings about economic benefit through a varied accommodation offer that would give those looking to holiday in this area options in terms of the nature of their holiday. However, the proposal is of a scale that would sit quietly in its surroundings and provide a low-key development in terms of its external impacts.
- 7.5 The proposal is a sustainable one, demonstrating clear benefits to local services and facilities, and providing and securing employment.
- 7.6 For all of these reasons, the proposal is found to be in accordance with the development plan, demonstrating the objectives of sustainable development and should, thereby, be supported.