



Planning, Design and Access Statement

Change of Use of Land for the Stationing of 2
Shepherd Huts to Provide Holiday Accommodation
The Butchers Arms, Sheepscombe, Stroud, GL6 7RH

January 2024

Planning, Design and Access Statement

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared to support and explain a full planning application for the stationing of 2no. holiday lets for use as self-catering accommodation in the grounds of The Butchers Arms, Sheepscombe.
- 1.2 The application is submitted on behalf of the owners of The Butchers Arms; Heartstone Inns Limited. The company has a portfolio of eight individual free houses located across the south and the southwest. The Butchers Arms is a traditional country pub which is popular for the classic pub food and drink on offer. Building on the success of the pub, Heartstone Inns is now seeking to invest further in the business by diversifying the service it offers to provide guest accommodation with the provision of two shepherd huts.
- 1.3 This planning statement explains the proposed development and how it has been assessed in the context of planning policy. It should be read in conjunction with the following supporting documents: -
- Location and Site Plan
 - Shepherd Hut Plans
 - Ecology Report
 - Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment
 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment
 - The Butchers Arms “Walks from the Door”

2. Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The Butchers Arms is a public house situated within the village of Sheepscombe. The building is orientated towards the main lane through the village and is bounded by residential properties on either side. To the rear is a collection of small sheds/stores for ancillary business functions and the apron of hardstanding between the front of the building and the lane is used for outside seating/beer garden purposes. To the east lies the pub car park, which contains 9no. parking spaces. The site for the proposed development is on an area of elevated land to the rear of the car park, accessed via a flight of steps. It comprises a grassed area which has occasional beer garden use. It is well enclosed on either side and along the rear boundary by hedges, shrubs and fencing. Low level shrubs follow the boundary with the car park.
- 2.2 The site is located within the Cotswolds National Landscape (former AONB) and in Flood Zone 1. In respect of heritage assets, The Butchers Arms is a Grade II Listed Building and is also located within the Sheepscombe Conservation Area. Other listed

Planning, Design and Access Statement

The Butchers Arms, Sheepscombe, Stroud, GL6 7RH

buildings lie within the vicinity of the application site, including Church Orchard, Rose Cottage, Sheepscombe House and The Coach House.

3. Planning History

3.1 The planning history of The Butchers Arms is recorded on the Council's website as follows: -

2009 – listed building consent granted for roof repair and part replacement including flashings (S.09/1171/LBC)

2010 – planning application withdrawn for provision of a static caravan (S.10/1345/FUL)

2013 – planning and listed building consent applications granted for internal and external alterations to provide new toilet facilities and extended dining, provision of cold store with shelter and demolition of existing lean-to store (S.13/2651/LNB and S.13/2650/FUL)

2023 – Consent granted for felling of Spruce, Ash and Sycamore (S.23/0056/TCA)

4. The Proposal

4.1 The proposal is for the stationing of 2no. shepherd huts within the grassed beer garden to the rear of the car park, for use as self-contained guest accommodation.

4.2 The shepherd huts would be compliant with the Caravans Act 1960 definition of a caravan, being capable for human habitation, brought to site as a single unit and retaining the ability to be moved. They would be supplied by Blackdown Shepherd Huts, who are based in the southwest. The ethos of this company is based on the supply of a high-quality product, using sustainable materials wherever possible. The majority of their suppliers are local small businesses and all timber used is sourced from businesses registered with the Forestry Stewardship Council.

4.3 Each hut would measure 5.88m in length by 2.58m in width (excluding steps and ramp) and overall height from ground to roof (excluding flue) of 3.35m. The walls would be clad in Blackdowns 'Heritage' exterior cladding (painted wiggly tin) and finished in a muted tone of either black or dark grey. The roof would be a traditional curved corrugated roof sheet, covered with a black plasticised coating. Window and doors are all timber framed, and internally high-performance sheep wool is used for insulation prior to wall and ceiling cladding being installed.

Planning, Design and Access Statement

The Butchers Arms, Sheepscombe, Stroud, GL6 7RH

- 4.4 As outlined on proposed site plan 21024-04D, the shepherd huts would be situated adjacent to each other and orientated so that their primary elevations (the entrance) face in a south direction towards the car park. Externally, each hut would be provided with an outside patio area and the remainder of the land around them maintained as grass with the provision of additional native shrub planting within the site and along its south boundary.
- 4.5 The shepherd huts would be connected to mains drainage via a link to the existing network. A new electric vehicle charging point would be installed in the car park and also cycle storage space offered to guests in the buildings to the rear of the main building.
- 4.6 Whilst there are a range of holiday lets within the general area, the amount of accommodation of the nature proposed is relatively low considering the tourism function of the area and its AONB designation. Therefore, the provision of an additional 2no. units would make a meaningful contribution to supply and diversify existing provision.
- 4.7 The accommodation would be marketed as 2no. units with high quality facilities and parking. All rooms would have external space with attractive views across the valley. They would be finished to a high standard and be entirely self contained with flat screen TV's, complimentary Wi-Fi, tea and coffee facilities and the flexibility of self catering and/or dining in the pub available. Bookings would be taken via the business's own website and other platforms such as booking.com.
- 4.8 Room rates are anticipated to be £100 per night excluding VAT and the accommodation would be available 52 weeks of the year on an overnight, short break or week-long basis. The anticipated occupancy rate is circa 76%.
- 4.9 Based upon this predicted occupancy rate and an estimated average room rate of £100, the following income could be generated: -
- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Number of rooms | 2 |
| Daily room spend | £100 each |
| Daily room utilisation | 76% |
| Total annual turnover | £55,500 (2*365*£100*76%) |
- 4.10 In addition, the pub estimates that around 75% of guests would also dine in the pub in the evenings, spending around £25 per head.
- 4.11 Construction: - The implementation of the proposed development would require a capital investment of around £200,000 over a construction period of around 1 month. The groundworks process would generate employment for construction workers.

Planning, Design and Access Statement

The Butchers Arms, Sheepscombe, Stroud, GL6 7RH

While Heartstone tend to use a main contractor with a pub/hospitality specialism, they would expect subcontract elements of the work to be sourced from tradesmen within the local area. In addition to the direct employment created, those working at the site would also contribute spending to the local economy, supporting other local services in the area.

4.12 Direct Employment: - The Butchers Arms currently employs 11 people, split 7 full-time and 2 part-time. It is anticipated that an additional 2 part-time jobs would be created as a result of the development, equating to 1 full-time staff member.

4.13 Indirect Employment: - In addition to the direct employment provided at The Butchers Arms, the proposed development would make a contribution to the provision of employment and the economy of the local area by supporting the supply chain. The existing business takes care to source as many services as possible from the Cotswolds area and would intend to use a local service to manage the laundry process. In addition, existing suppliers would benefit from the increase in trade once the accommodation units are operational. Suppliers from the local area already provide the following products/services to the business: -

- Meat
- Fish
- Fruit and vegetables
- Dairy
- Eggs
- Beer and cider
- Cleaning services
- Maintenance
- Janitorial services

4.14 External Visitor Spend: In addition to their spend within the pub itself, it is anticipated that both tourist and business guests would use the accommodation as a convenient base to explore the local area, services, facilities and visitor attractions. In doing so external visitor spend would make a contribution to the local economy.

5. Relevant Planning Policies

5.1 Planning decisions should accord with the development plan unless material considerations indicated otherwise.

5.2 For the purposes of determining current planning applications, the relevant development plan comprises the adopted Stroud District Local Plan (2015). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) also contains material planning considerations.

Planning, Design and Access Statement

The Butchers Arms, Sheepscombe, Stroud, GL6 7RH

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

- 5.3 The NPPF sets out the context for the presumption in favour of sustainable development; stating that economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.
- 5.4 Various sections of the NPPF are of relevance to the proposed development as follows:-
- Section 4 - Decision Making
 - Section 6 - Building a Strong Competitive Economy
 - Section 8 - Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities
 - Section 9 - Promoting Sustainable Transport
 - Section 11 - Making Effective Use of Land
 - Section 12 - Achieving Well-Designed Places
 - Section 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment
 - Section 16 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Stroud District Local Plan

- 5.5 Local Plan policies of relevance to this application are as follows:-
- CP3 Settlement Hierarchy
 - CP14 High quality sustainable development
 - CP15 A quality living and working countryside
 - ES1 Sustainable construction and design
 - ES3 Maintaining quality of life within environmental limits
 - ES6 Providing for biodiversity and geodiversity
 - ES7 Landscape character
 - ES10 Valuing our historic environment and assets
 - E4 Development on existing employment sites in the countryside
 - E10 Provision of new tourism opportunities
- 5.6 The requirements of these planning policies have been fully considered and it is evident that the following represent the key issues in this application: -
- principle of development
 - design, appearance and impact on the area
 - heritage impact
 - residential amenity
 - highways
 - ecology
 - trees

Planning, Design and Access Statement

The Butchers Arms, Sheepscombe, Stroud, GL6 7RH

6. Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

- 6.1 The overarching principle of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This is enacted at district level through Local Plan Core Policy 3 (CP3), which establishes a settlement hierarchy in order to promote sustainable communities through the bringing together of housing, jobs and services in an attempt to maintain and promote the viability of local facilities and reduce the need to travel. Sheepscombe is identified as a Tier 5 settlement where, as identified by CP3, there is a lack of basic facilities to meet day to day requirements, but there may be scope for very limited development within the identified settlement limit to meet local need.
- 6.2 Although directly applying to the open countryside, the objectives of Core Policy 15 (CP3) are also of relevance in that it allows development which is essential to be located there, in order to promote public enjoyment of the countryside and support the rural economy through employment, sport, leisure and tourism. Policy E10 concerns the provision of new tourism opportunities. It states that exceptionally, development may be supported in lower tier settlements such as Sheepscombe where a range of criterion are met, including that there should be evidence that the facilities are in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction.
- 6.3 The Butchers Arms is located within the Cotswold National Landscape area and on the footpath network which provides excellent access to the surrounding countryside and other settlements such as Painswick and Cranham. Indeed, the business has published a leaflet called “Walks from the Door” providing details of six circular walking routes from the premises.
- 6.4 The intention is that the proposed shepherd hut accommodation would be directly marketed at those seeking the peace and tranquillity of the rural environment and wishing to explore the Cotswold landscape through a range of countryside pursuits, including walking. As such, there is clear evidence that the facilities proposed are in conjunction with an existing countryside attraction.
- 6.5 Policy E10 also requires a demonstration of how the proposal could assist rural regeneration and the well-being of communities. The NPPF states that support should be given to the ability of established shops, facilities and services to develop and modernise, retaining them for the benefit of the community. The proposed development would enable the diversification and enhancement of a well-established and successful existing local business which already draws local people and visitors from further afield to the village. Economies of scale are a factor in the future sustainability of public houses. The addition of rooms and the addition of another income stream enhances the chances of the business being economically viable in the future.

Planning, Design and Access Statement

The Butchers Arms, Sheepscombe, Stroud, GL6 7RH

- 6.6 Moreover the provision of tourist accommodation can be undertaken without undermining the business's ongoing ability to provide convenient access to its facilities by the community.
- 6.7 It is also noted that a key objective of the Cotswold National Landscape Management Plan is to enhance the range of accommodation available within the protected area. This proposal would offer two high quality units on a year-round basis for short breaks and week long stays, helping to extend the holiday season, boost local employment and increase use of local suppliers. Moreover, guests would use the accommodation as a base to visit the local area, and in doing so would give support to the services and facilities within it. Hence, the proposal would offer an economic and social benefit to the wider community.
- 6.8 In terms of accessibility, it is acknowledged that the level of services and facilities in Sheepscombe are relatively limited. It benefits from a church, village hall and The Butchers Arms. However as well as the food and drink offering, the pub also provides additional services to the community including by receiving parcels for village residents, providing a takeaway food service, ad-hoc retail sales and live music, bingo and quiz nights. It is understood that there is also a daily bus service from the village to Stroud (via Painswick). Moreover, the proposal is a low impact form of holiday accommodation, more likely suited for short term periods by walkers and cyclists, where holiday makers are likely to arrive with their own provisions. The level of vehicle movements from the site made by private vehicles are unlikely to be significant and the limited harm due to a more isolated location is undoubtedly outweighed by the wide-ranging benefits to tourism, leisure and the local economy.
- 6.9 In light of the foregoing, it is the case that the proposal accords with criteria (i), (ii) and (v) of the Policy E10 and can be considered acceptable in respect of the principle of development.

Design and Appearance

- 6.10 Policy E10 requires that the scale, design and use of the proposal is compatible with its wider landscape setting and that no suitable alternative existing buildings or sites exist which are available for reuse.
- 6.11 It can be confirmed that there are no other buildings at the site which are available or capable of providing overnight accommodation. The current beer garden is difficult to operate as it is a significant distance from the bar and kitchen and as a result is underutilised, with customers preferring to use the seating area at the front of the pub. Hence, the stationing of the shepherd huts is intended to be an efficient re-use of the beer garden land.

Planning, Design and Access Statement

The Butchers Arms, Sheepscombe, Stroud, GL6 7RH

- 6.12 The shepherd huts would be of a very high-quality finish with an agrarian character and muted dark external finishes. They would assimilate well with the landscaped enclosure of the site, which will be further enhanced by the proposed additional planting. The site is also tucked in the corner of the plot and the huts would not be particularly conspicuous when viewed from public vantage points at long or close range, and even then, would be seen as part of the existing grouping of development within this part of the village.
- 6.13 The huts would appear subservient to the main pub building and would have the appearance of a small grouping of subsidiary structures. They would be spaced at 2m to provide a reasonable separation distance which would break up their massing.
- 6.14 For these reasons, it is considered that the proposed shepherd huts would not have a negative impact on the quality and appearance of the protected landscape in this area.

Heritage Impact

- 6.15 Policy E10 also refers to ensuring that a development does not detract from the character and appearance of the settlement. In light of the Grade II listing designation of the pub and other nearby dwellings and also its location within the Conservation Area, a full Heritage Statement and Heritage Impact Assessment has been undertaken. This is submitted in support of the planning application.
- 6.16 This work concludes that the proposed development will overall result in 'less than substantial harm' being caused to the setting of the nearby listed buildings including the Butcher's Arms itself and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The level of harm, at its worst case, has been assessed as 'negligible adverse' which involves a change in values or setting of the asset to the extent that the change in significance of the resource is barely perceptible.
- 6.17 The NPPF is clear that where less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset is found, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this instance, the public benefits of the proposal in economic and social terms are clear, as set out in preceding paragraphs. They are considered to significantly outweigh the minimal level of harm to heritage interests that has been identified.

Residential Amenity

- 6.18 Policy E10 states that new tourist development should cause no detriment to the amenities of residential areas.
- 6.19 The Butchers Arms is situated within the built core of Sheepscombe and is surrounded by residential development on all sides. Careful attention has been paid to

Planning, Design and Access Statement

The Butchers Arms, Sheepscombe, Stroud, GL6 7RH

the siting of the shepherd huts and operational arrangements to ensure that no adverse amenity impacts are experienced by those living nearby.

- 6.20 By virtue of the orientation of the shepherd huts and their location within the site, it is unlikely that any adverse overlooking or overbearing impacts would be experienced by neighbouring properties.
- 6.21 Furthermore, it is the case that a certain level of noise is generated by existing activities at the application site. This is a busy pub which has good wet and dining trades. External noise generated by these activities include the manoeuvring of vehicles within the car park areas, people walking to and from the pub and use of the outside seating areas in fine weather. These activities already give rise to noise which can be heard beyond the boundaries of the premises. It is acknowledged that the use of the shepherd huts as guest accommodation may lead to some increase in the activity within the area of the site in question, but the cumulative effect of this would not be unacceptable. The sound of guests arriving at and leaving the huts would only be taking place on an intermittent basis. The presence of guests sitting outside and talking may occasionally be noticeable to residents living nearby, but this would be entirely weather dependent and would only likely be experienced by neighbours when they themselves are using their own gardens and is not an activity which would be at all alien in an area with numerous residential gardens and a beer garden, which are already generating a range of background noises.
- 5.29 In addition, the proposal includes control measures to ensure that any potential for disturbance is kept to a minimum. Indeed, extremely careful consideration has been given to this matter because the applicants have the strong desire to maintain good relations with their neighbours.
- 5.30 The shepherd huts themselves have an extremely high level of insulation. Blackdown Shepherd Huts use sheep's wool insulation which is a renewable resource with excellent sound absorbing properties. It is frequently used as an effective alternative to mineral based acoustic absorbent materials and would effectively mitigate noise transmission between the three huts and beyond the boundaries of the site.
- 5.31 Furthermore, the level of noise and activity generated by the proposal would also be limited by the small amount of units proposed and due to their modest size and facilities. They would each contain one double bedroom and so would only be suitable for couples or single occupancy, as opposed to larger family units. As an absolute maximum, there would only ever be 4 people staying in the huts, and this would only occur when it is at full occupancy.

Planning, Design and Access Statement

The Butchers Arms, Sheepscombe, Stroud, GL6 7RH

- 5.36 The business will also operate under a set of 'house-rules' for guests, including a restriction on outside noise between specific hours. Adherence to these requirements would be overseen by the managers of the premises given that they live on site.

Highways

- 6.22 Policy E10 requires that the proposal has safe and suitable access.
- 6.23 It is anticipated that the shepherd hut guests would arrive to the site by private vehicle and park in the car park. Whilst this is not a large car park by any means, it is not considered that there would be a significant increase in parking demand or any consequent harm to highway safety, due to the very modest increase in vehicle movements that would arise.
- 6.24 Vehicles leaving the new car park benefit from reasonable visibility in both directions and the width of the entrance is such that there is a good view of vehicles leaving/arriving to avoid potentially conflicting manoeuvres.

Ecology

- 6.25 Policy E10 requires that tourist developments are compatible with any acknowledged biodiversity interest. A Preliminary Ecology Survey was undertaken by Cotswold Wildlife Surveys in November 2023 and the associated report supports this planning application. The survey found that the site was of low wildlife interest. For mitigation purposes, the ecologists recommend a range of measures which will be adhered to fully during the development process.

Trees

- 6.26 In light of the location of the site within the Conservation Area and the presence of trees in its vicinity, a tree survey and protection strategy has been prepared to support the application.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The application has been considered against both national and local planning policy and is found to be compliant with the principles contained therein. The proposed development of 2no. shepherd hut holiday lets represents an opportunity for the diversification of an existing business in a rural location, boosting the viability of the pub and also supporting wider objectives for improving access to the Cotswolds National Landscape area.
- 7.2 No adverse heritage, amenity, biodiversity or highways conditions would arise as a result of the development. It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission is granted at the earliest opportunity.