

Planning Statements

Planning Statement – Shepherd's Hut

Introduction

This Planning Statement accompanies a retrospective planning application for the siting and use of a shepherd's hut within the residential curtilage of the property. The hut is used for short-term visitor accommodation alongside private family and friends' use.

The application seeks to regularise the existing use of the shepherd's hut and to allow Wiltshire Council to assess the development fully on its planning merits.

Site Description and Proposal

The shepherd's hut is of traditional timber construction and is discreetly sited within the established grounds of the property, overlooking a lambing field. Its scale, appearance and siting are characteristic of traditional rural structures and are appropriate to the surrounding countryside with timber windows and doors and clad in English Oak.

The hut has been in situ since October 2021 and operates as a low-intensity form of rural visitor accommodation. The proposal does not involve any permanent foundations or material alteration to the landform and remains visually subservient to the host dwelling.

Access, Parking and Highway Considerations

The site benefits from adequate access arrangements and ample off-street parking provision. There is sufficient space within the site to accommodate three vehicles associated with the main dwelling, together with guest parking for up to two cars.

Guests staying at the shepherd's hut park alongside the rear of the hut, ensuring that vehicles are discreetly positioned and do not interfere with the residential use of the site. The layout provides ample space for vehicles to manoeuvre and turn within the site, allowing safe access and egress without the need for reversing onto the public highway.

Frequency of use

The shepherd's hut is used at a modest level, reflecting short-term visitor accommodation rather than permanent residential use. Occupancy naturally varies throughout the year and remains consistent with a small-scale rural tourism use, occupancy averages 4.9 nights per week (70%). We operate a 2-night minimum stay and most guests stay for this duration. Occasionally we have up to 4-night stays but these are very rare, occurring perhaps 3 times a year. 3 night stays generally happen over bank holiday weekends.

Vehicle movements associated with the hut are limited. Typically, a single guest vehicle arrives and departs during the day. When considered in the context of the existing traffic on the main road linking Cirencester and Malmesbury, this level of vehicle movement is negligible and does not give rise to any material highway safety or capacity concerns.

Planning History and Rationale for the Application

Prior to the construction and siting of the shepherd's hut in October 2021, we sought advice from Wiltshire Council regarding the need for planning permission with Perry Lawson on the 09th June 2021. Perry kindly advised that planning permission was not required, as the hut fell within the definition of a caravan under the relevant legislation.

On this basis, the hut was installed and brought into use. The shepherd's hut has since been a wonderful addition to our home, used by family and friends and for short-term letting over a period of approximately four years. Whilst it is our understanding the hut was operational for 4 years, we have chosen to submit a retrospective planning application rather than pursue a Lawful Development Certificate (LDC) to take a transparent approach to regularising the use of the shepherd's hut.

Although advice was previously sought from the Council prior to construction and it was understood at that time that planning permission was not required, the subsequent commercial success of the short-term letting use was not anticipated and at the point of construction, not built for this purpose. Considering the change of use, we consider that a full planning application is the most appropriate and robust mechanism to assess the proposal on its planning merits and to ensure the continued use of the shepherd's hut is properly within Wiltshire Councils approval.

Within the Wiltshire framework, Core Policy 34, which relates to rural employment and diversification, provides support for small-scale tourism uses where they are compatible with their surroundings and contribute positively to the local economy.

The short-term visitors staying at the shepherd's hut make hugely positive contribution to the local rural economy. Guests use nearby facilities including our village farm shop, the local public houses, The Potting Shed, The Wheatsheaf and Sassa's Kitchen at Pettifers, as well as other local services and businesses during their stay. All local businesses have commented on the benefit to the local economy. Sasa's Kitchen have provided a bespoke discount code for guests.

We believe the development is ideally situated to work within the policies of the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015), the Crudwell Neighbourhood Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024). These establish a presumption in favour of sustainable development, requiring that proposals in rural areas support the vitality of local communities while safeguarding the character and

appearance of the countryside. The NPPF also provides support for rural tourism and diversification where proposals are appropriately scaled and designed, and where they respect local character and landscape.

Our Shepherd's Hut is of traditional construction and overlooks a lambing field. The farmer (who is also a lecturer at the Royal Agricultural University in Cirencester) has requested the opportunity to use it as a case study of diversification and sustainable rural tourism.

Conclusion

The shepherd's hut represents a modest, well-designed form of rural visitor accommodation that respects local character of the village, provides economic benefits to the surrounding area. We note the hut does not remove any housing stock from local people and operates without adverse impacts on highway safety, residential amenity or the wider countryside.