

# Justification and Viability Statement in Support of a Golf Simulator Lodge at The Rising Sun, Lacock

## Introduction

The Rising Sun is a rural public house that plays an important role within the local community, providing food, drink, employment and a social meeting place for residents and visitors alike. Like many rural hospitality businesses, trading is highly seasonal, with significantly stronger performance during the spring and summer months than during autumn and winter.

The proposed golf simulator lodge has been designed specifically to address this seasonal imbalance by providing an all-weather leisure attraction that will generate additional trade throughout the quieter months of the year. The proposal directly supports the long-term viability of the public house and is consistent with the objectives of Core Policies 48 and 49, which seek to retain and protect rural public houses.

## Current Summer versus Winter Trading

The Rising Sun benefits from a large garden, outside bar, BBQ facilities and panoramic countryside views, making it a popular destination during the warmer months. Summer trading is significantly stronger due to increased tourism, outdoor dining and favourable weather conditions.

During the winter period, customer numbers reduce considerably. Shorter days, colder weather and reduced tourism mean that the outdoor facilities cannot be utilised to the same extent, resulting in lower turnover despite the pub remaining fully operational.

This seasonal fluctuation is a common challenge faced by rural pubs and creates uncertainty in staffing levels and long-term business planning.

## Implications of Lower Winter Trading

Reduced winter trade places pressure on the business in several ways.

Most importantly, maintaining permanent staff throughout the quieter months becomes increasingly difficult. As trade reduces, the business relies more heavily on recruiting temporary staff during the busy summer season while reducing working hours during winter.

This seasonal cycle makes recruitment and staff retention increasingly challenging. Experienced employees often seek more stable employment where year-round hours can be guaranteed. Recruiting and retraining new seasonal staff each year also increases operational costs and affects service consistency.

A more balanced level of trade throughout the year would enable the business to retain a larger number of permanent employees, improving staff continuity, customer service and operational efficiency.

## Expected Use of the Golf Simulator

The proposed golf simulator will provide a unique indoor leisure attraction that is not weather dependent and will appeal to a broad range of customers.

It is anticipated that the simulator will attract:

- Local golfers wishing to practise throughout the winter.
- Visitors from surrounding golf clubs.
- Social groups.
- Corporate bookings.
- Families and casual users.
- Winter leagues and competitions.

The simulator is expected to operate throughout the day and into the evening, with increased demand during the autumn and winter months when outdoor golf becomes less attractive.

Unlike many hospitality investments, the simulator will generate repeat visits, encouraging customers to return regularly rather than making occasional seasonal visits.

The facility will also increase secondary spending through food and beverage purchases before, during and after simulator sessions, creating additional revenue across the wider business rather than solely within the simulator itself.

### Supporting Staff Retention

The increased winter trade generated by the simulator is expected to provide a more consistent level of business throughout the year.

This improved trading pattern will enable The Rising Sun to retain more permanent staff during winter rather than relying on seasonal recruitment. Providing stable year-round employment benefits both the business and the local community by supporting skilled jobs in a rural location.

Staff retention also reduces recruitment and training costs while maintaining high standards of customer service.

### Overall Impact on the Viability of the Public House

The proposed development represents an investment in the long-term sustainability of The Rising Sun rather than an unrelated commercial venture.

By diversifying the business and creating an indoor attraction that complements the existing pub, the proposal will:

- Increase winter trading when income is traditionally at its lowest.
- Improve year-round cash flow.
- Generate additional food and drink sales.
- Encourage repeat local visits throughout the year.
- Support permanent employment.
- Strengthen the long-term financial resilience of the business.
- Reduce reliance on seasonal summer trade.

The proposal therefore directly contributes to securing the continued operation of The Rising Sun as a successful rural public house.

Rather than changing the character of the site, the golf simulator will complement the existing business by encouraging more customers to use the pub throughout the year, helping to safeguard an important community asset for the future.

### Conclusion

The proposed golf simulator lodge has been carefully designed to improve the long-term viability of The Rising Sun by addressing one of the greatest challenges faced by rural public houses—seasonal fluctuations in trade.

By creating a year-round attraction that generates additional winter income, supports employment, encourages repeat visits and increases food and beverage sales, the proposal will significantly strengthen the financial sustainability of the business.

For these reasons, the development accords with the objectives of Core Policies 48 and 49 by helping to secure the future of an established rural public house and ensuring that it continues to serve the local community for many years to come.

Tom Foster, The Leafy Pub Co Ltd