MCDONALD WILKINSON TONGE CHARTERED PLANNERS

PLANNING STATEMENT

Creation of a small glamping site of seven units

Land to the South of Queensbridge Farm, Grange Road, Overton on Dee, Wrexham, LL13 0LE

Mr S Heighway

November 2025

Report Info

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1. Introduction

1.1. This Planning Statement has been produced independently by MWT Planning Ltd in support of a planning application made on behalf of Mr S Heighway ("the Applicant") for the creation of a small glamping site of seven units at Land to the South of Queensbridge Farm, Grange Road, Overton on Dee, Wrexham, LL13 OLE ("the Site").

1.2. The purpose of this Planning Statement is to outline the key relevant planning considerations for the proposed development and to provide an informed assessment based on the relevant planning policy context and other material considerations.

1.3. In summary, the Planning Statement demonstrates that the proposed development is an acceptable form of development and one which should be supported by the Local Planning Authority (LPA).

2. The Site and its Surroundings

2.1. Queensbridge Farm is situated on the eastern side of Grange Road, approximately 1.5km south of Overton and around 1km north-west of the Welsh–English border. The proposed application site is 0.9ha in size and lies roughly 150m south of the host dwelling, positioned towards the southern boundary of an established agricultural field.

2.2. The land to the north comprises the remainder of the same field, while an area of woodland lies to the east. A cluster of residential properties are located approximately 100m to the north-east. To the immediate south is an area of ancient woodland, and to the west lies Grange Road.

2.3. The application site is located within the open countryside, a Special Landscape Area and is within the Maelor Saesneg Registered Historic Landscape.

3. Planning History of the Site

3.1. There is no relevant planning history associated with the application site other than a pre-application enquiry (ENQ/2024/1154) that was undertaken in November 2024.

3.2. The concluding paragraph of the written pre-application response provided by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) stated that:–

"The site lies within a sensitive area in terms of the natural environment, flood risk and visual impact. It is also within an area not considered sustainable for travel. Any application submitted must demonstrate the suitability of the site and the development in terms of flood risk, the impact on the woodland and the Wildlife Area, the impact on the heritage landscape, impact on highway safety, impact on the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC and in respect of locational sustainability in order for any scheme to be supported.

The advice is based on the planning policies, guidance and circumstances that apply at the time of this response. This advice may not be relevant may should policies or circumstances change before a formal planning application is submitted. You should also note that the above comments are the informal views of an Officer of the Council and do not commit the Council in the determination of any formal planning application".

3.3. Since the receipt of the LPA's written pre-application response, a pre-application meeting was held with the Council to discuss the scheme in more detail. At that meeting the applicant was advised to relocate the pods completely away from the ancient woodland.

3.4. This advice has been taken on board and the proposed glamping pods now avoid the ancient woodland and instead are completely located within the field.

3.5. Regarding the planning policy position, there has also been a notable update since the pre-application advice was provided by the Council to the Applicant. This is noted on the Council's website which states:–

"By Order of the High Court of Justice (19th May 2025), Wrexham County Borough Council's decision of 20th December 2023 to adopt the Wrexham Local Development Plan (LDP) has been quashed. The LDP is no longer part of the development plan for Wrexham County Borough and is now un-adopted".

4. The Proposed Development

4.1. Planning permission is sought for the creation of a small glamping site. This will include seven glamping pods.

4.2. The glamping pods will all be of one design, rectangular in shape with a flat roof and constructed with timber. Each pod will have a small outdoor area framed by a timber canopy structure with a hot tub and a seating and decking area underneath.

4.3. The pods are arranged in a loose linear form (west-east) along the backdrop of the ancient woodland.

4.4. One car parking space per pod will be allocated plus a disabled space, creating 8no. spaces in total. Car parking will be contained to the northern end of the field, next to the existing field access, which will provide vehicular access to the site.

4.5. Once cars are parked, visitors will walk along a path linking the car park with the glamping pods.

4.6. Along with the proposed pods, a small welfare/storage building is proposed to the north-west of pod no.1 and two separate foul water treatment plants are proposed; one at the eastern end of the pods and one at the western end of the pods.

4.7. An extensive landscaping scheme is incorporated into the design of the proposed development.

4.8. If successful in acquiring planning permission, the glamping site will become a franchisee of 'The Secret Garden Glamping'.

5. The Secret Garden Glamping

5.1. The original Secret Garden Glamping site is based in West Lancashire. Since its launch in 2021, it has become the most booked glamping site in the whole of the UK and has achieved 100% occupancy since its first overnight stay was undertaken in 2021. It is also the most followed and viewed glamping site in the UK on various social media platforms. The site is currently fully booked for the next 18 months. The current waiting list has over 112,000 customers wanting to book a stay at the site and the business is currently turning away 1000 bookings per week.

5.2. Various awards and grants have been awarded to the business and the business featured on BBC1's Dragon's Den in 2024, securing the support of Deborah Meaden. This has led to the opportunity to create separate franchise sites of The Secret Garden Glamping throughout the UK.

5.3. Currently, there are only two other sites affiliated with The Secret Garden Glamping within the UK, one of which is based in Cornwall and one in Devon.

6. Relevant Planning Policy

6.1. Future Wales: The National Plan 2024 is the Welsh Government's National Development Plan for Wales and sets out the Welsh Government's objectives and aspirations for the nation moving towards 2040.

6.2. Policy 5 of Future Wales (Supporting the Rural Economy) states that *"foundational economic activities remain the backbone of the rural economy. In particular, tourism and leisure is recognised as a major and growing employer and contributor to the Welsh rural economy. Sustainable forms of tourism, including opportunities for active, green and cultural tourism, should be explored"*.

6.3. Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 12, 2024) represents the Welsh Government's primary national planning policy document and at Paragraph 5.5.1 confirms that tourism is "*vital to economic prosperity and job creation in many parts of Wales. Tourism can be a catalyst for regeneration, improvement of the built environment and environmental protection"*.

6.4. PPW Paragraph 5.5.3 adds: *"In rural areas, tourism-related development is an essential element in providing for a healthy and diverse economy. In addition to more traditional forms of rural tourism, planning authorities should plan positively for active, green and cultural tourism where they are appropriate. Development should be sympathetic in nature and scale to the local environment"*.

6.5. Paragraph 5.5.6 of PPW further confirms that Local Planning Authorities in Wales should provide a framework for maintaining and developing well located, well-designed and good quality tourism facilities.

6.6. At a local level, the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (1996-2011) comprises the adopted development plan for Wrexham County Borough.

6.7. UDP Policy CLF9 (Visitor Accommodation Outside Settlement Limits) and CLF10 (Touring Caravan and Camping Sites) are of principal relevance to this development proposal.

6.8. The un-adopted Wrexham Local Development Plan (LDP) is noted to still be a material planning consideration and recent appeal decisions within Wrexham have confirmed this to be the case. Indeed, it is noted the evidence base underpinning the UDP is approximately 30 years' old, whereas the unadopted LDP is underpinned by much more recent evidence and has been found 'sound' by a Planning Inspector as part of an examination in public.

6.9. It is therefore appropriate to afford significant weight to the provisions of the unadopted LDP within the overall planning balance.

6.10. Policy EM5 of the unadopted LDP is most relevant to the consideration of this planning application as it relates to 'Visitor Accommodation Outside Settlement Limits'.

7. Planning Considerations

Principle of the Development

7.1. The application site is located outside of any defined settlement areas and is located within the open countryside. Considering the nature of the proposed development and the current status of Wrexham's two development plans, it is considered the policy of primary importance in this case is Policy EM5 of the unadopted LDP.

7.2. The proposal comprises a development of seven small-scale glamping pods on a greenfield site within the open countryside. The application site is located within a rural part of the County Borough, where the local tourism economy is already strong with the following three key attractions being close by - the 11-mile Pontcysyllte Aqueduct & Canal World Heritage Site, Erddig and Chirk Castle.

7.3. The proposals will enhance this, offering additional short-term accommodation to be utilised by tourists and visitors to the area which in turn will assist in strengthening the local economy and providing local jobs during both the construction and operational phases of development. Indeed, the Applicant has received a letter of support from the Destination Manager of Wrexham Borough Council which is incorporated as part of the package of documents submitted with the planning application.

7.4. Whilst the tourism economy is strong within this area, there does appear to be a notable lack of glamping sites within the application site's vicinity and therefore the proposed glamping site will provide increased visitor choice.

7.5. In addition, the business will create local jobs and will utilise the offerings provided by the local businesses within the area. For example, the local bakery and butchers within Overton will be used to supply 'BBQ Boxes' and 'Breakfast Boxes' which will be available for visitors to the site to purchase for their stay,

7.6. Policy EM5, in relation to new glamping developments, gives primary importance to issues relating to the design, scale and landscape visual impact of a development upon the character of the area. This is assessed in detail in paragraphs 7.8 – 7.11 of this Statement.

7.7. Subject to the proposed development not causing any harmful or unacceptable impacts upon the character of the host rural landscape, we contend that the proposed development is acceptable in-principle and is in accordance with the provisions and requirements of unadopted LDP Policy EM5.

Design, Visual and Landscape Impact

7.8. The application site lies within a Special Landscape Area and is within the Maelor Saesneg Registered Historic Landscape.

7.9. The proposed scheme has been carefully designed to provide low-key but high-quality glamping pods that will utilise the adjacent ancient woodland as a backdrop. We consider that it is of a modest scale and comprises very low-lying structures that will nestle into this landscape. This will be assisted by the topography of the site which falls gradually from north to south. Consequently, the pods will be located at a lower point within the field where they will be barely visible from the wider area. Furthermore, the proposals include a substantial landscaping scheme that includes the planting of large numbers of native trees, native hedgerows and native scrub planting. This proposed landscaping scheme will significantly enhance the site and will successfully screen the proposed development.

7.10. In terms of hard landscaping, the proposed parking and turning area will be finished with a natural gravel/crushed stone surface so as to not appear overly-engineered within the rural setting of the site. Porous bark paths will lead from the parking area to each pod; again utilising a natural material which will not appear 'harsh' within the local landscape.

7.11. We therefore consider that the proposed glamping site demonstrates a clear understanding of the characteristics of the site and the area and will not cause any harmful or adverse impact upon the visual amenities of the area nor upon the character of the host rural landscape.

Registered Historic Landscape (RHL)

7.12. The site falls within Maelor Saesneg which is included on the statutory Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales. Policy SP15 Historic and Cultural Environment of the unadopted LDP is therefore most relevant in respect of the proposed development.

7.13. This policy states that development within a RHL will only be supported where it conserves, protects, preserves or enhances the heritage asset.

7.14. In support of this planning application a Heritage Appraisal and Impact Assessment (HIA) has been undertaken. This discusses that potential harm could be by virtue of the following:

1. Adverse intrusion and presence upon the proposals site which may harm the heritage interest of the Maelor Saesneg Registered Historic Landscape; either contextually, visually or via the potential for harm to buried archaeological remains.

2. The proposals may intrude upon the setting of the grade II designated milepost to a degree that harms the ability to appreciate heritage significance. This may be by virtue of encroachment of the proposals and/or intervisibility of them with the designated asset.

3. The proposals may intrude upon the setting of the formally undesignated (assumed) Queens Bridge to a degree that harms the ability to appreciate heritage significance. This may be by virtue of encroachment of the proposals and/or intervisibility of them with the bridge.

In response to the above points the HIA concludes that:-

1. The proposed glamping pods will not be readily visible from the main road by passing cars due to the thick roadside hedges and extensive planting which is proposed. The proposed glamping pods comprise lightweight timber structures that bear directly upon the ground and require minimal excavation works. Overall, the timber materials proposed for the pods and the extensive consideration given to landscaping works mitigate any harm, that may arise to heritage significance. In my view, whilst the proposed lodges comprise change upon the land, they will not harm the registered historic landscape and heritage interest will therefore be preserved.

2. The proposed glamping pods or associated access will not intrude upon the setting of the grade II designated milepost. Therefore, harm will not occur and the ability to appreciate heritage interest will be preserved as it exists currently.

3. Given the dense undergrowth between where the pods are proposed to be sited and the bridge, the pods will not affect the ability to appreciate heritage significance and heritage 14 interest will be preserved as it exists currently.

7.15. Overall, therefore, we contend that this particular part of Maelor Saesneg RHL will be protected and preserved and will therefore accord with Policy SP15 of the adopted LDP in this respect.

Ecology and Green Infrastructure

7.16. The application site currently comprises an area of improved agricultural grazing land. Given this, it is considered to be of low ecological value.

7.17. The application is accompanied by an Ecological Impact Assessment Report. This has been prepared in relation to the proposed development effects on nearby designated site, habitats, and protected species. The assessment has been informed by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and range of Phase 2 surveys, including NBW surveys; bat static surveys; updated habitat walkovers; and a badger walkover.

7.18. The report concludes that the proposed development demonstrates strong alignment with Planning Policy Wales, particularly its requirement for all developments to deliver a Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB).

7.19. It notes that the scheme avoids significant ecological harm by relocating the glamping pods from ancient woodland to species-poor modified grassland, thereby protecting irreplaceable habitats and sensitive species.

7.20. Valuable features such as hedgerows and offsite woodland are retained and buffered, and no tree felling is proposed.

7.21. The ecological assessment confirmed the absence of significant populations of protected species within the development footprint, and appropriate mitigation measures are in place for species that may be present, including badgers, hedgehogs, and amphibians.

7.22. The proposed landscaping scheme introduces a mosaic of habitats—wildflower meadows, native scrub, hedgerows, and woodland edge planting—that will significantly enhance the site's ecological value. These habitats support a wider diversity of fauna and promote ecosystem resilience through increased structural diversity and connectivity.

7.23. Additional enhancements include the installation of bat and bird boxes and the implementation of a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) to ensure long-term ecological benefits.

7.24. Sensitive lighting and pollution control measures further protect nocturnal and aquatic species, maintaining dark corridors for commuting bats such as lesser horseshoe and Myotis species.

7.25. In line with the Chief Planner's 2019 guidance, which states that developments failing to deliver NBB should be refused, this scheme clearly demonstrates a net gain in biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. As such, it fully complies with both national and local planning policy and sets a strong precedent for sustainable development in ecologically sensitive areas.

Trees

7.26. Fundamentally, since the submission of the pre-application enquiry, the pods have been repositioned away from the ancient woodland, and no trees are to be felled.

7.27. Notwithstanding this, a Tree Survey and an Arboricultrual Impact Assessment (AIA) have been prepared to support the planning application.

7.28. These identify that the proposed storage building and the footpath are partially within the Root Protection Areas (RPA's) of existing trees. However, the AIA includes suitable mitigation measures to avoid damage to these RPA's.

Flood Risk and Drainage

7.29. With regards flood risk, the application site is located within Zone 1 of the Flood Map for Planning in terms of both fluvial flooding and surface water flooding. Thus, flood risk is not a planning constraint in this instance and there will be no adverse flooding impacts caused by the proposed glamping pod development in planning terms.

7.30. Regarding foul and surface water drainage, a Drainage Report and Scheme has been prepared to support the planning application. As part of this, percolation tests were undertaken on site which confirmed that the subsoil has a high clay content and insufficient infiltration capacity.

7.31. Consequently, the drainage scheme has been designed with the foul drainage being split into two independent treatment and disposal schemes**.** Each scheme will utilise a septic tank for primary settlement, followed by a treatment plant filter for tertiary treatment. Treated effluent will then be discharged to ground via drainage mounds.

7.32. For roof water management, the combined roof area of all eight structures totals 168m^2**,** generating approximately 1.1m^3/day of surface water run-off. This will be attenuated and dispersed via a 3m^3 modular soakaway system**.**

7.33. Overall, the proposed foul and surface water drainage design provides a compliant, sustainable, and low-impact solution that ensures environmental protection and long-term operational reliability for the proposed glamping site.

Highway Safety, Access and Car Parking

7.34. The existing access to the field will be utilised to provide access to the proposed glamping site. An Access Plan accompanies the planning application and illustrates that a 2.4m x 160m visibility splay to the north is achievable and a 2.4m x 120m visibility splay to the south is achievable.

7.35. In addition, given that the proposed development is only for seven one-bed glamping pods, it is considered it is not of a scale which has the potential to cause any significant impact upon the use of the wider local highway network.

7.36. A new car parking and turning area will be constructed within the site which will allow vehicles to park comfortably whilst also ensuring all vehicles can both access and egress the site in a forward gear.

7.37. In light of the above, the proposed development is acceptable in planning terms from a highway safety and car parking perspective.

Residential Amenity

7.38. The nearest neighbouring properties to the site are located approximately 80m away to the north-east of the nearest glamping pod (Pod 7).

7.39. Given the small scale of the glamping site, the separation distance between the application site and the neighbouring properties, along with the existing screening created by the trees, we consider that there will be no detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents.

Location of the Site

7.40. Whilst this location and the nature of the use is likely to attract customers to arrive mainly by car, the Applicants are keen to implement measures such as providing an EV charging point for electric vehicles and encouraging the use of bicycles.

7.41. Critically, the rural location of the site is a fundamental part of its attraction to future tourists/holiday makers, providing an escape from an urban environment. Notwithstanding this, the village of Overton is within walking distance of the application site where some local amenities are available without the need to travel further afield by car.

7.42. Furthermore, we consider that it is reasonable to suppose that tourists on a rural holiday may be more prepared to contemplate walking or cycling the relatively short distance to access the nearest facilities or walking to the bus stop.

7.43. Overall, therefore, we consider that the proposed development would provide an appropriate form of rural tourist accommodation which would occupy a site within a sufficiently accessible location such that future users would not be wholly reliant on the private car.

8. Conclusions

8.1. The proposal seeks to deliver a modest, low-impact form of rural tourism accommodation that aligns with both national and local planning policy objectives, promoting sustainable rural economic growth and tourism diversification.

8.2. The site lies within open countryside, approximately 1.5km south of Overton. The glamping pods are positioned within a field setting, away from the adjacent ancient woodland, and will sit low within the landscape. The design incorporates natural materials, muted finishes, and extensive new planting of native trees, hedgerows, and scrub to ensure that the development integrates sensitively into its surroundings. Car parking is discreetly located at the northern end of the site, accessed from the existing field entrance.

8.3. Comprehensive supporting assessments confirm that the proposal is acceptable in environmental and technical terms.

8.4. The scheme forms part of The Secret Garden Glamping franchise, a nationally recognised and award-winning enterprise with proven success in delivering sustainable, high-quality tourism experiences.

8.5. The development supports the aims of Future Wales (Policy 5) and Planning Policy Wales, which encourage rural tourism and economic diversification, as well as Policy EM5 of the unadopted Wrexham Local Development Plan, relating to visitor accommodation outside settlement limits.

8.6. In summary, the proposed glamping site represents a sustainable, small-scale rural tourism development that will contribute positively to the local economy, enhance biodiversity, and respect the landscape and heritage character of its setting. The proposal fully accords with the relevant provisions of national and local planning policy and should therefore be supported by the Local Planning Authority.