

RITTY FARM, HEREFORDSHIRE SUSTAINABLE ACCOMMODATION

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT



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1. BRIEF

1.1 Site and Development

Crown & Canopy were approached by Tessa Nichol and David Cotterell to produce a Design and Access Statement to support the expansion of a business at Ritty Farm, Michaelchurch, Escley, Herefordshire HR2 0JW.

The proposed development includes the provision of a temporary removable timber-built wagon with associated access, parking and landscaping for the purposes of tourist accommodation, designed in response to available guidance. The proposed development has been considered against the **Herefordshire Core Strategy (HCS)** and the **Vowchurch and District Group Neighbourhood Development Plan (VNDP)** and the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**.

1.2 Local and Professional Input

In addition to reference to relevant policy as outlined above, the brief has been informed by the pre-planning application response from Herefordshire County Council and communication with immediate neighbours.

The owners have informed Vowchurch Parish Council that an application is due to be submitted, and have opened dialogue in order to answer any questions local parish councillors or local residents may have about the development.

The final proposal has been assessed against a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and a Surface and Foul Water Drainage Assessment.



2. CONTEXT

2.1 Landscape Character Area

The site lies within the West Midlands National Character Area 99. The Black Mountains and the Golden Valley. It is described as:

The Black Mountains and Golden Valley National Character Area (NCA) lies at the western edge of Herefordshire, at the boundary with Wales; its western boundary follows the boundary of the Brecon Beacons National Park. The Black Mountains extend into the NCA from the west, and this remote, wild upland edge country creates a sharp contrast with the neighbouring Herefordshire Lowlands to the east and the South Herefordshire and Over Severn NCA to the south. It is a border landscape with a strong sense of transition from the remote, wild, moorland mountaintops with a distinctly Welsh flavour in the west to the wide, fertile agricultural lands of the Golden Valley in the east, which evoke the cultivated intimacy of lowland England. The Black Mountains' rugged hill-top plateau can be seen from the Malvern Hills to the east and beyond, offering inspiration, a sense of space, peace, and quiet enjoyment of nature.

Herefordshire Core Strategy SS6, Environmental Quality and Local Distinctiveness states that 'development proposals should conserve and enhance those environmental assets that contribute towards the county's distinctiveness, in particular its settlement pattern, landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets and especially those with specific environmental designations.'

Identified pressures within the Character Area relevant to this proposal include:

CA99 notes that the 'key challenges for the area include the fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, in particular the fragile upland habitats, and maintaining a sense of remoteness while providing a range of recreational opportunities.'

A key characteristic of CA99 is described as:

One of the most undisturbed parts of England, with little transport infrastructure and no major roads. High levels of tranquillity can be experienced, particularly in the western uplands. Recreational opportunities including a section of the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail enables people to enjoy this landscape.



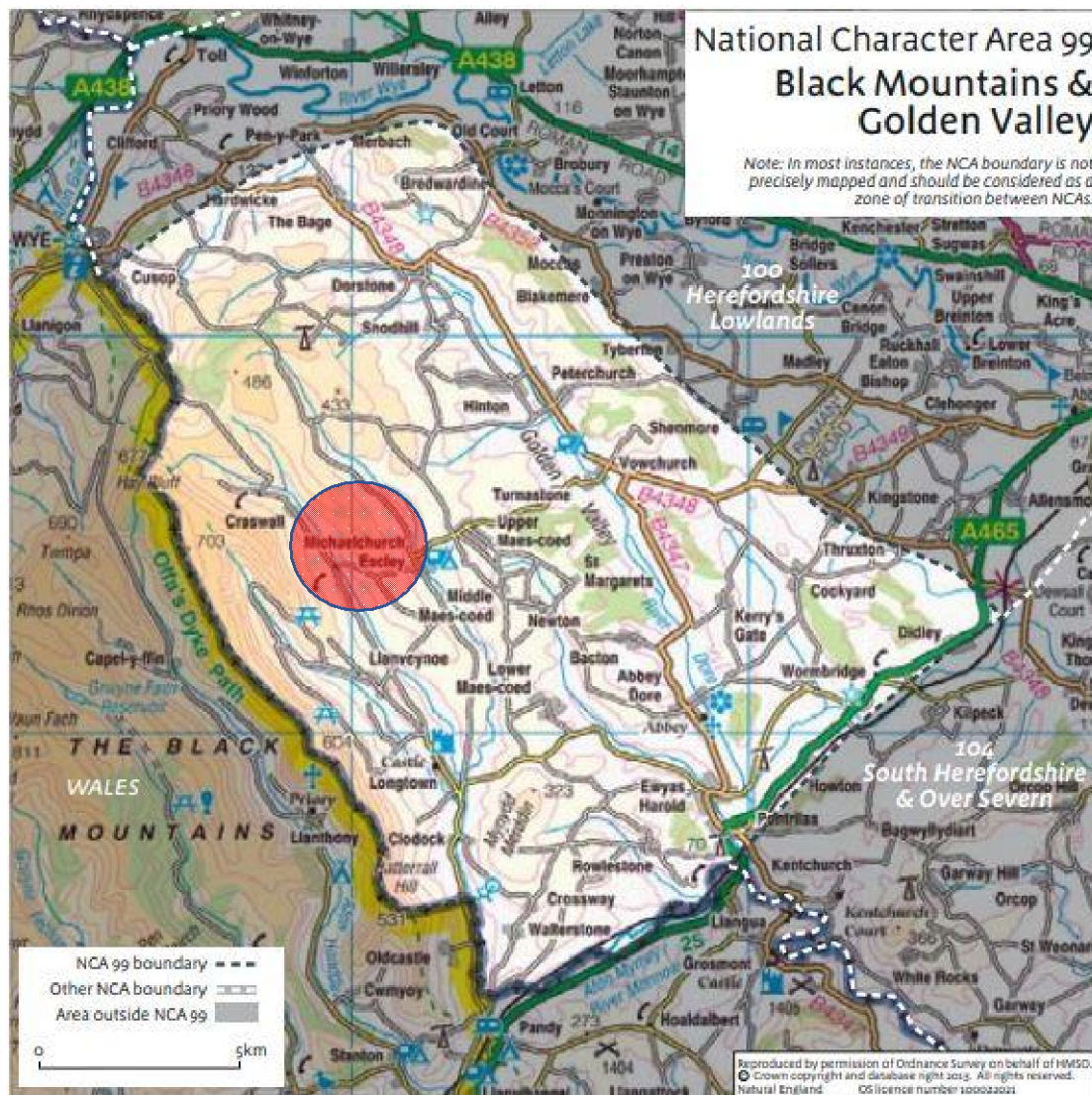


Image 1. Map showing NCA 99 and red dot marking project location.

Environmental Opportunities include:

SEO 2: Protect, manage and enhance the upland fringes, the lower slopes and the valleys, with their mosaics of habitats including moorland, heathland, woodland, meadows and pastures, and their field patterns defined by hedgerows, to enhance ecological networks and strengthen the distinctive landscape character of the Black Mountains and Golden Valley

SEO 4: Protect, manage and enhance the qualities of tranquillity, wildness and remoteness and the area's historic and geological assets while providing nature-based recreational opportunities that are accessible to a diverse range of people and encourage sustainable tourism.



3.1 Land

The proposal site comprises an agricultural parcel of land measuring 0.639 acres (0.258 Hectares) within the wider farm site of 25 acres of mixed woodland and pasture. This plot has been chosen for a formal planning application due to its low ecological value, therefore having minimal impact on biodiversity and its location making the most of the views and access.



Image 2. SITE PLAN

Indication of site layout only - please see drawing package for scaled drawing of Site Plan

3.2 Constraints

The following have been identified as potential constraints in development of the accommodation at the proposed site.

- ***Landscape and Visual Impact***

Landscape and visual impact considerations and issues are addressed in Chapter 10 of this document, Impact on Amenity, this includes details of how existing screening will be utilised to minimise landscape impact.



- ***Flooding***

Although the site crosses Flood Zone 3, the cabin site itself is located outside any flood risk area and no surface water hazards have been identified by the Environment Agency, therefore a Flood Risk Assessment is not required in support of any planning application. Further details in Chapter 12 Flood Risk.

- ***Drainage and Ecology***

Drainage issues are covered in Chapter 7 of this document, Design, Massing and Scale, and is addressed in full in the Foul and Surface Water Drainage Report.

Ecological impact is addressed in the accompanying Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and covered in Chapter 9 Environmental Consideration.

- ***Habitat Regulations Assessment***

With the Escley Brook tributary draining into the River Wye in Wales, and not England, the Habitat Regulations Assessment process is not triggered by Natural England and therefore not deemed to be a legitimate concern for this application. However, an appropriate drainage strategy has been advised and details are outlined in Chapter 7 of this document, Design Massing and Scale and within the attached Surface and Foul Water Report.

- ***Transport and Access***

Transport and access considerations and issues are covered in Chapter 11 of this document, Transport and Access. This includes details of access to sustainable transport, including details of bicycle arrangements and access to public highway.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

A planning search returned one planning application on The Long Barn, now Ritty Farm submitted on the 15/11/2019 for a tool building and workshop for the farm ref P193917/PA7.

The application was approved and permission was granted for the building.

No other applications were found.



5. CONSULTATION

5.1 Herefordshire Council Pre-Application Consultation

A pre-application consultation was undertaken by the applicant prior to the creation of this document. This was by way of a pre-application form and site details submitted to Herefordshire Council Planning Department. This was responded to by David Gossett, Senior Planning Officer for Herefordshire Council, on 4th September 2020. Reference 201371/CE.

The planning officer's conclusion within the pre-application advice document suggested that the low impact and economic benefits of the proposal are considered sufficient to outweigh localised visual and landscape harm. It is advised that an appropriate drainage strategy be detailed in an application, along with the following:

- Foul and surface water drainage strategy
- Details of access to sustainable transport, including details of bicycle arrangements
- Illustration of how existing screening will be utilised to minimise landscape impact
- Details of materials
- Confirmation of no external lighting
- Details of access to public highway

Overall, it was considered that if an application were to be forthcoming it would gain officer support providing the above advice is considered.

5.2 Immediate neighbours

The owners discussed the project with neighbours at Rhydunnog farm, Woodpecker Lodge, Llan-baddon Farm, Rockford Farm, the property opposite Ritty Farm (name unknown), The Bridge Inn pub and White Cottage Farm. All immediate neighbours had no objections to the proposal and broadly supported the application.

The owner of the Bridge Inn pub, Michaelchurch Escley actively support the proposed accommodation stating that after such a tricky period any extra custom and support for the pub is a huge help. They go on to note that without rural tourists the Bridge Inn would not be a viable business and the locals would lose an important place. They state that developments like the proposed Ritty Farm accommodation help support wider positive social outcomes that the pub delivers. Please see attached letter of support for full details.

The owner of Hopes of Longtown (local shop) was also consulted and posed no objections.

6. PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Business Expansion

Ritty Farm (previously The Long Barn) has been owned by the family since [REDACTED] with further land acquired in [REDACTED]. A holiday cottage next door to the farm has been run by the family for the past 4 years as tourist accommodation, due to its success the family wish to expand this business venture to provide important additional revenue.



The farm is a smallholding comprising of upland pasture and areas of woodland, but this type land is typically difficult to derive a conventional farm income from. Diversifying with the holiday cottage has been a welcome new income stream but without a small expansion, the land is still unsustainable. The creation of a second tourist accommodation unit will enable the family to generate a sustainable income from the farm in a low impact way and fund further woodland planting and sustainable and sensitive land management.

The business also makes use of their experience and knowledge of the hospitality industry and ensures that any parts of the farmland will not have to be sold off to provide income. For this reason, the proposal for sustainable tourist accommodation provision at Ritty Farm is regarded as an underlying locational and business need.

Although the wider area around Ritty Farm does support some tourist accommodation, this is generally in the form of traditional tent and caravan camping grounds or cottage homestays. The introduction of glamping accommodation to the area offers a more sustainable option for tourists to visit the area and support the local economy.

6.2 Policy Support

Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2011 - 2031 (HCS)

- SS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

The low impact nature of this proposal (see Chapter 7. Design, Massing and Scale) has been designed to cause negligible impact to the character of the landscape within which it sits, whilst also improving the economic, social and environmental conditions in the local area, thereby meeting the aims of this policy.

- SS4 - Movement and transportation

Despite its rural location, the proposal takes into consideration impact on the transport network, encouraging the use of public transport where possible and is carefully designed so as to ensure safe usage of the public highways (see Chapter 11. Transport and Access).

Policy SS4 states that *‘where practicable, development proposals should be accessible by and facilitate a genuine choice of modes of travel including walking, cycling and public transport.’* The proposed site is close to popular walking routes, accessible via public footpaths running across the land, there is a pub within walking distance and bikes will be provided. These features and their promotion to guests encourage engagement with the local area without the use of private vehicles, in line with Policy SS4.

- SS5 - Employment provision

The existing holiday cottage has created work for the landowners and a local housekeeper employed for 1-2-days per week at £12 per hour generating an annual income of between £5-10,000 per year. The additional accommodation would generate further sustainable local employment for a host and a cleaner. There is also ongoing maintenance required for the project and this will increase the existing groundworkers hours by 100% making up two days per week. Local contractors and



tradesmen would undertake the build and groundworks thereby creating employment provision during the development phase of the project and beyond.

- **SS6 - Environmental quality and local distinctiveness**

Policy SS6 states that *'development proposals should conserve and enhance those environmental assets that contribute towards the county's distinctiveness, in particular its settlement pattern, landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets and especially those with specific environmental designations.'*

Relevant to this proposal are the following:

- landscape, townscape and local distinctiveness
- the network of green infrastructure
- local amenity, including light pollution, air quality and tranquillity
- physical resources, including minerals, soils, management of waste, the water environment, renewable energy and energy conservation

- **SS7 - Addressing climate change**

Policy SS7 states that *'development proposals will be required to include measures which will mitigate their impact on climate change.'* This proposal addresses the following climate mitigation points as outlined in the HCS:

- focussing development to the most sustainable locations
- delivering development that seeks to reduce the need to travel by private car and which encourages sustainable travel options including walking, cycling and public transport
- designing developments to reduce carbon emissions and use resources more efficiently
- supporting affordable, local food production, processing, and farming to reduce the county's contribution to food miles
- protecting the best agricultural land where possible
- taking into account the known physical and environmental constraints when identifying locations for development
- ensuring design approaches are resilient to climate change impacts, including the use of passive solar design for heating and cooling and tree planting for shading
- minimising the risk of flooding and making use of sustainable drainage methods
- reduction, re-use and recycling of waste with particular emphasis on waste minimisation on development sites
- developments must demonstrate water efficiency measures to reduce demand on water resources

- **MT1 - Traffic Management, highway safety and promoting active travel**

The proposal takes into account traffic management and highway safety as detailed in Chapter 11. Transport and Access. Ways in which the proposal promotes active travel are also outlined in Chapter 11. These measures are in response to points raised by the Local Highways Authority and reported in the Pre-App advice report from Herefordshire Council Planning Department.

- **E1 - Employment provision**

Policy E1, Employment Provision supports proposals which *'enhance employment provision and help diversify the economy of Herefordshire.'* This proposal achieves the following:

- the proposal is appropriate in terms of its connectivity, scale, design and size



- the proposal is an appropriate extension to strengthen or diversify an existing business operation

- **E4 – Tourism**

Policy E4 states that the tourism industry will be supported by a number of measures including:

1. *recognising the unique historic character of Hereford and the market towns as key visitor attractions and as locations to focus the provision of new larger scale tourist development*
2. *the development of sustainable tourism opportunities, capitalising on assets such as the county's landscape, rivers, other waterways and attractive rural settlements, where there is no detrimental impact on the county's varied natural and heritage assets or on the overall character and quality of the environment. Particular regard will be had to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty*
3. *retaining and enhancing existing, and encouraging new, accommodation and attractions throughout the county, which will help to diversify the tourist provision, extend the tourist season and increase the number of visitors staying overnight. In particular proposals for new hotels in Hereford will be encouraged. Applicants will be encouraged to provide a 'Hotel Needs Assessment' for any applications for new hotels*
4. *ensuring that cycling, walking and heritage tourism is encouraged by facilitating the development of long-distance walking and cycling routes, food and drink trails and heritage trails, including improvements to public rights of way, whilst having special regard for the visual amenity of such routes and trails, and for the setting of heritage assets in their vicinity and*
5. *the safeguarding of the historic route of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal (shown on the Policies Map), together with its infrastructure, buildings, towpath and features. Where the original alignment cannot be re-established, a corridor allowing for deviations will be safeguarded. New developments within or immediately adjoining the safeguarded corridor will be required to incorporate land for canal restoration. Development not connected with the canal that would prevent or prejudice the restoration of a continuous route will not be permitted.*

Policy E4 acknowledges that many visitors to the county come to enjoy the beautiful countryside and there is likely to be a demand for new facilities and accommodation associated with this.

- **RA6 - Rural economy**

The proposal will support the rural economy in line with following points relating to Policy RA6, Rural Economy

- *support and strengthen local food and drink production*
- *support and/or protect the vitality and viability of commercial facilities of an appropriate type and scale in rural areas, such as village shops, petrol filling stations, garden centres and public houses*
- *involve the small-scale extension of existing businesses*
- *promote sustainable tourism proposals of an appropriate scale in accordance with Policy E4 - Tourism*
- *promote the sustainable use of the natural and historic environment as an asset which is valued, conserved and enhanced*

The proposal also adheres to the following points within the policy



- *ensure that the development is of a scale which would be commensurate with its location and setting*
- *do not cause unacceptable adverse impacts to the amenity of nearby residents by virtue of design and mass, noise, dust, lighting, and smell*
- *do not generate traffic movements that cannot safely be accommodated within the local road network*
- *do not undermine the achievement of water quality targets in accordance with Policies SD3 and SD4.*

- **LD1 - Landscape and townscape**

The proposal sensitively considers the surrounding landscape including conservation and enhancement of the natural, historic and scenic beauty of the area in line with Policy LD1, Landscape and Townscape. Details are outlined in Chapter 10, Impact on Amenity.

- **LD2 - Biodiversity and geodiversity**

The proposal aims to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity as outlined in Chapter 9, Environmental Consideration, in line with Policy LD2, Biodiversity and geodiversity. The enhancements are in response to guidance outlined in the Phase 1 Habitat Assessment and Biodiversity Enhancement Plan drawn up for the site and included as an attachment.

- **LD3 - Green Infrastructure**

Policy LD3 states that proposals *'should protect, manage, and plan for the preservation of existing and delivery of new green infrastructure, and should achieve the following objectives:*

- 1. identification and retention of existing green infrastructure corridors and linkages; including the protection of valued landscapes, trees, hedgerows, woodlands, water courses and adjoining flood plain*
- 2. provision of on-site green infrastructure; in particular proposals will be supported where this enhances the network, and*
- 3. integration with, and connection to, the surrounding green infrastructure network.'*

- **LD4 - Historic environment and heritage assets**

Policy LD4 – Historic environment and heritage assets states that *the scope of the works required to protect, conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings should be proportionate to their significance.*

- **SD1 - Sustainable Design and energy efficiency**

Policy SD1, Sustainable Design and energy efficiency states that *development proposals should create safe, sustainable, well integrated environments for all members of the community.* The proposal is low impact and energy efficient in its design and approach, as detailed in Chapter 7, Design, Massing and Scale, Chapter 8, Materiality and Chapter 11, Transport and Access.

- **SD3 - Sustainable water management and water resources**

Sustainable water management of the proposal is outlined in Chapter 7, Design, Massing and Scale.

- **SD4 - Waste water treatment and river water quality**

Policy SD4 states development should not undermine the achievement of water quality targets for rivers within the county, in particular through the treatment of wastewater. Waste water treatment



of this proposal is outlined in the foul and surface water drainage report and is detailed Chapter 7, Design, Massing and Scale.

Vowchurch and District Group Neighbourhood Development Plan, adopted October 2017 (VNDP)

The Vowchurch and District Group Neighbourhood Development Plan overarching objective is to *preserve the beautiful and essentially rural character of the area, whilst accommodating housing developments that enable more families to live in the area, including within the existing settlements.*

Policy 1 - Protecting and enhancing the local environment

Policy 1 outlines the need for developments to demonstrate:

- *that their design and scale reflect the character of the local environment and existing buildings in a way which preserves or enhances the natural and historic beauty of the local area*
- *that they protect and enhance wildlife sites, listed buildings and ancient monuments, and assets such as stone walls, wildlife sites and commons*
- *that they protect and maintain native trees, hedgerows and other important vegetation and do not have an adverse impact on local brooks, streams and rivers.*

Policy 3 - Developments in open countryside

Proposals for development in the Michaelchurch-Escley area are subject to the following criteria:

- *they should broadly be for no more than 1 to 3 homes on each site, reflecting the historic building pattern of small developments*
- *they should be on land around or between existing buildings*
- *where possible they could be for the conversion of existing buildings such as stables, barns and workshops*
- *schemes should blend in sensitively with the historic pattern of houses*
- *they are protected from the risk of flooding and will not result in increased flooding to elsewhere.*

Policy 7 – Amenity

Policy 7, Amenity states that *new development must provide a good standard of amenity for future occupants and have an acceptable impact on the amenity of the occupiers of existing residential properties.*

Policy 9 – Applications for new tourist developments

Policy 9, Applications for new tourist developments states that *the development of new tourism facilities will be supported where they are appropriately located and respect the environmental, landscape and historic character of the area in which they are located.*

Policy 10 – External lighting

Policy 10, External lighting states that *any planning proposals that are for or include external lighting will have to demonstrate that there has been a proper assessment of the need for such lighting. In particular it should be demonstrated that care has been taken to design appropriate lighting which minimises the impact on the occupiers of nearby properties and minimises light pollution and energy consumption.*



The document states that *a majority of respondents supported the development of small businesses (73% workshops, 77% farms and 55% small manufacturing) This has to be seen against a background in which over 30% of people in the Golden Valley work at home, whilst more have to travel over 10 miles to get to work.*

It also states that *less than half of those responding (43%) supported the inclusion of tourist facilities in the neighbourhood plan (57% either opposed it or had no opinion). 56% of people thought that there should be bed and breakfast accommodation and 46% short term holiday lets in any new tourist facilities.*

National Planning Policy Framework (Revised 19 February 2019) **Section 6. Building a strong, competitive economy**

The proposal is supported by Section 6 of the NPPF which comments that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. It goes on to touch on tourism specifically saying that planning policies and decisions should enable sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.

Paragraph 83 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.*

Paragraph 84 notes that planning policies and decisions

should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

The proposed development is located just outside the settlement of Michaelchurch-Escley, which means the Craswall Turn bus stop is half a mile (10minute walk) from the site, providing public transport connections to Hereford train station via bus T14.

The area is popular with groups visiting the Wye Valley, the Brecon Beacons and Black Mountains and this outdoor recreation will be supported on the site with the provision of secure bicycle parking.



7. DESIGN, MASSING & SCALE

7.1 Structures

It is proposed that the timber-built wagon is located at the field as seen in the Site Plan RIT-101, where it will have minimal visual impact and avoid negative impact on the Escley brook or be affected by flood risk. The field is surrounded by established hedgerows and trees.

The wagon will consist of a single-storey timber structure with 20 square metres of floor space. As a temporary removable structure on wheels, the wagon does not require foundations and sits directly on the existing ground surface which allows for the site to drain naturally without obstruction. The temporary nature also negates the need for large vehicle or plant machinery.

The interior would consist of a kitchenette, bedroom space, shower, and toilet. The roof of the structure would be covered with corrugated tin sheets of a dark colour to avoid glare and suiting the rural environment. The walls will be clad in untreated timber, which in time will silver off and sit harmoniously in the natural setting. The minimal approach and sensitive selection of materials ensure the development will be in line with **Herefordshire Core Strategy Policies SS1, Presumption in favour of sustainable development, SS6, Environmental quality and local distinctiveness and E4, Tourism as well as Vowchurch and District Group Neighbourhood Development Plan Policies 1, Protecting and enhancing the local environment 3, Developments in open countryside 7, Amenity and 9, Applications for new tourist developments.**

There will be no overhead exterior lighting to be used or installed on the site, to minimize disturbance as well as enhance the camping and dark sky experience, this is in direct response to the **VNDP Policy 10, External Lighting.**

Additional tree planting across the development field has already taken place and this will further reduce any visual impact and enhance biodiversity in the area, in direct accordance with **Herefordshire Core Strategy Policy LD3, Green Infrastructure.**

As the structure is yet to be acquired, we have included a selection of images showing similar designs of timber clad wagons. These should serve as an indication of the nature and type of structure outlined in the application.





Image 3 Wagon on wheels



Image 4 Timber clad temporary wagon





Image 5 Timber wagon on wheels showing corrugated roof



Image 6 Example interior of a timber wagon

7.2 Services



The site will be run on solar power with the proposed location of the panels upon the wagon roof. However, the applicants are open to advice or recommendations on the preferred location of the panels.

LED light fittings and mobile phone charging points will be installed in the wagon and WC facilities. All lights will be low wattage with a warm hue and shielded away from the main vistas in order to maintain dark skies and local tranquillity, in line with **VNDP Policy 10, External Lighting** and in direct accordance with the planning consultation response.

Water heating equipment within the showers will be instantaneous so that no hot water needs to be stored on site. Water saving sanitary fittings and appliances are to be included within the shower and the minimal surface water run-off from the wagon will discharge into the surrounding area. All paths and parking areas will include permeable surfaces to assist with rainwater drainage.

An efficient operational waste management and recycling strategy will be carried out by the operator as required by Herefordshire Council, and in line with **Herefordshire Core Strategy Policies SD3 and SD4**. Secure cycle storage is located on site (see Site Layout Plan RIT-101) to encourage guests to travel by bicycle.

7.2.1 Waste Management

A surface and foul water drainage assessment was carried out by H+H Drainage in November 2020 and is included as an appendix. Foul and clean water at the site are to be managed separately, the details of which are outlined in full in the report. The foul water treatment system is to serve the proposed holiday 'wagon'.

Surface Water Disposal

A sustainable surface water drainage was deemed possible at the proposed site. By discharging roof water directly on to the hardstanding area and by constructing the hardstanding as a permeable surface, there is no necessity for on-site testing.

As advised by the report the following measures will be adopted:

- Roof water from the proposed wagon be allowed to drip from the roof without the need for guttering. The hardstanding beneath the drip line to be at least 300mm deep so as to reduce the effect of erosion and so as to increase attenuation.
- The new hardstanding area constructed to be permeable. By doing so, any run-off will be reduced as will run-off pollution. This method of drainage will have a minimal impact on the local habitat, and the permeable surface will attenuate the surface water thus reducing the current green filed run-off rate. In addition, this type of hardstanding would be in-keeping with the surrounding area and natural habitat.

These measures ensure the proposal is in line **Herefordshire Core Strategy Policy SD3 Sustainable water management and water resources and SD4, Waste water treatment and river water quality**

Due to the low pollution hazard from the wagon, the report identified no pollution risk to the local environment or to the Escley Brook.



Foul Water / Sewage Treatment System Design

As there is no public foul sewer within 30m of the site and ground conditions will not support a drainage field, a packaged sewage treatment plant with discharge to the local watercourse will be a suitable and ecological solution to foul water and sewage treatment on site.

The site is deemed suitable for an off-mains sewage treatment system. The site is located within the River Wye Catchment, but outside of the SAC 'purple zone'. There are no discharge restrictions therefore the off-mains drainage system should be installed and maintained in line with General Binding Rules and the secondary treated effluent can then be discharged to the local watercourse.

The off-mains foul sewage treatment system should be designed as follows:

- The foul drainage must be kept separate to the surface water and roof water drainage system.
- The foul drainage from the wagon should be laid to a single sewage treatment plant conforming to BSEN.12566.
- The foul effluent should be treated and discharged to the local watercourse under the General Binding Rules.
- The sewage treatment plant should be maintained in accordance with the General Binding Rules.

Further details on type and model of proposed sewage treatment can be found in the report.

8. MATERIALITY

8.1 Wagon

In line with **Herefordshire Council Core Strategy Policy LD1**, materials have been chosen to sustain local distinctiveness and character, protecting Herefordshire's natural environment and assets.

In response to comments from Herefordshire Council planners, the colour of the sheet roofing will be carefully considered to avoid adverse effects on the wider landscape. Darker non-reflective colours will be used. The untreated timber that will weather naturally is an appropriate material and as noted in the Pre-App advice report from the planning officer, *the temporary nature of them means that they are not a permanent intrusion into the landscape*, and scale and impact has been kept to a minimum.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATION

9.1 Phase 1 Habitat Assessment & Biodiversity Enhancement Plan

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was carried out by Ecology Services in November 2020 and is submitted as part of this planning application in supporting documents.

The report concluded that the site is dominated entirely by species poor grassland that is of no special ecological interest. As such the proposals will not result in any impacts to protected species or habitats of special note. It further stated that:



On current evidence there are no reasons to suggest that the proposed development would lead to any significant impact on protected species or ecological feature of value at the national, county or local level. The development proposals and associated biodiversity enhancements will contribute a net gain for wildlife at the site. As such there are no reasons for refusing planning permission on the grounds of nature conservation.

The appraisal identified that the only Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats within or adjoining the site are hedgerows, but that these will not be affected by the wagon or parking area as the access from the parking area to the holiday wagon will be via an existing footpath through the trackside hedgerow. All hedgerows will be retained and sensitively managed. It is further noted that BAP habitats in the wider area will not be affected.

As recommended by the report the applicants intend to include the following habitat enhancements:

- All boundary hedgerow vegetation will be retained and protected as part of the development proposals.
- Landscape planting utilising native species of trees and shrubs.
- Provision of bat boxes, bird nesting boxes and pollinator boxes.

The appraisal states that these ecological enhancements will contribute a net gain in biodiversity at the site.

An ecological clerk of works will be appointed prior to the commencement of works and will be on call to deal with any unforeseen ecological issues in the unlikely event that they should arise.

It is noted that the closest non-statutory ecological designation is Escley Brook SWS (located almost 100 metres to the west of the proposed wagon). A sustainable drainage strategy has been produced that will manage surface water and foul water. There will be no direct discharge in to Escley Brook and the proposed soakaway and treatment strategy complies with all domestic and EU legislation (see Surface and Foul Water Drainage Strategy. H+H Drainage. November 2020).

The appraisal gives a guidance and a list of recommendations for site operations during the build of the development which the Applicant will look to undertake should planning permission be approved for this application.

10. IMPACT ON AMENITY

10.1 Herefordshire Council Concerns

When considering the potential impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties and the surrounding area the consulted planning officer in the Pre-App advice report from Herefordshire Council stated:

Given the local topography the cabin has the potential to be widely visible although this will depend in part on the siting, screening and material finish. As such, to avoid any unwanted intrusions into this sensitive landscape it would be advisable to position the cabin either in a manner that affords it



some natural screening or provides a backdrop to it when viewed from the West. The application should clearly demonstrate this point and provide perspective views of the cabin within the context of the existing tree cover. Any new planting required should be in keeping with the local landscape character and be of locally appropriate species.

The applicants intend to enhance the site with native tree planting and use this sensitively to screen the wagon and parking areas. These measures will ensure the development is in line with Herefordshire Core Strategy policy LD1.

10.2 Vowchurch Neighbourhood Development Plan Concerns

Vowchurch Neighbourhood Development Plan requires new developments to *provide a good standard of amenity for future occupants and have an acceptable impact on the amenity of the occupiers of existing residential properties* as part of **Policy 7, Amenity**. As a temporary single structure development with low ecological and amenity impact the proposal adheres to this policy as well as **Policy 9, Applications for new tourist developments** which requires that *new tourism facilities are appropriately located and respect the environmental, landscape and historic character of the area in which they are located.*

Policy 10, External lighting is also addressed by the measures outlined in Chapter 7 Design, Massing and Scale.

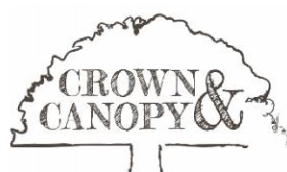
10.3 Landscape and Visual Impact

The proposed development intends to minimise landscape and visual impact, following guidance from the planning officer in response to the pre-planning application to be aligned to Herefordshire Core Strategy policy LD1 which states that development should ensure:

- *that their design and scale reflect the character of the local environment and existing buildings in a way which preserves or enhances the natural and historic beauty of the local area*
- *that they protect and enhance wildlife sites, listed buildings and ancient monuments, and assets such as stone walls, wildlife sites and commons*
- *that they protect and maintain native trees, hedgerows and other important vegetation and do not have an adverse impact on local brooks, streams and rivers.*

The Pre-App advice report notes that *‘while the proposed structures are not locally distinctive to the area the temporary nature of them means that they are not a permanent intrusion into the landscape’.*

The small scale of the wagon, and it only being one additional structure means the development is kept to a minimum. Other elements such as dining and outdoor bathing will also be kept to the bare minimum, ensuring that the whole development is very low impact and in line with **Core Strategy policies SS6, SD1 and LD1** which *‘seek to ensure that new development is appropriately designed and*



laid out so as to ensure they make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and the character and appearance of the landscape'. The material choice (outlined in detail in Chapter 8 Materiality) will also help reduce visual impact and create a structure in harmony with the surrounding landscape.

11. TRANSPORT & ACCESS

Please see the annotated site plan RIT-101 submitted as part of this planning application which identify space allocated for turning and parking.

Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy Policy SS4, Movement and transportation states that *'where practicable, development proposals should be accessible by and facilitate a genuine choice of modes of travel including walking, cycling and public transport.'*

The proposed site is close to popular walking routes, accessible via public footpaths running across the land, there is a pub within walking distance and bikes will be provided and secure bike parking is shown on the attached site plan RIT-101.

Craswall Turn bus stop is half a mile (10minute walk) from the site, providing public transport connections to Hereford train station via bus T14 which runs four times a day. A pick-up and drop-off service will be provided to collect guests from and to the bus stop to make transport by public transport with luggage easier.

On site bicycle parking provision will support nearby cycle routes to the popular Llantonry Priory and Hay on Wye. Vehicular access is only provided as far as the car park area (shown on site plan RIT-101), where a short footpath links to the wagon site. A concern was raised in the pre-app advice report that where the footpath used by guests crosses the farm track, there may be an issue with farm traffic. However, the traffic on this track is minimal as there are no farm buildings, solely the farmhouse lived in by the owners and the holiday cottage. There is only very occasional use by farm vehicles. These measures encourage engagement with the local area without the use of private vehicles, in line with **Policy SS4**. It also contributes to **Policy SS7, Addressing Climate Change** which notes the need for development that seeks to reduce the need to travel by private car and which encourages sustainable travel options including walking, cycling and public transport.

Policy E4 Tourism and Policy E6 Rural economy both state the need for developments that are of a scale commensurate with its location and setting. The single structure development is deemed appropriate for this setting and landscape by the planning officer.

Policy MT1, Traffic Management, highway safety and promoting active travel.

The points below set out the observations and assessments of the highways elements of the proposal based on the submitted information:



The Local Highways Authority (LHA) provided comments within the Pre-App advice report. It was noted that the *capacity of the highway network serving the site is adequate to accommodate the scale of the proposed development.*

The access connection between the site and the highway and visibility splays are shown in the access plan shown below (RIT-701). As advised by the LHA, the applicants are happy to improve access and visibility should LHA deem it necessary in response to the more detailed plans.

Direct access to the wagon is connected to the private road, a long stone track that runs through the farm and past the intended parking area leading up to the farmhouse and holiday cottage. The parking area is opposite the wagon, so this crossing access has been considered in relation to the traffic usage which is limited to guests of the holiday cottage and the owners themselves, except for a yearly hay cut there is little to no farm traffic.

The access plan RIT-701 attached to the application details the existing entrance to the property, and in red Y1 and Y2 marking the advised visibility splay (by the architect). Advisories from the architect included the possibility of lowering the height of the existing hedgerow to allow for these proposed splays. The clients would be happy to undertake any advised remedial works to the entrance if required by the LHA.



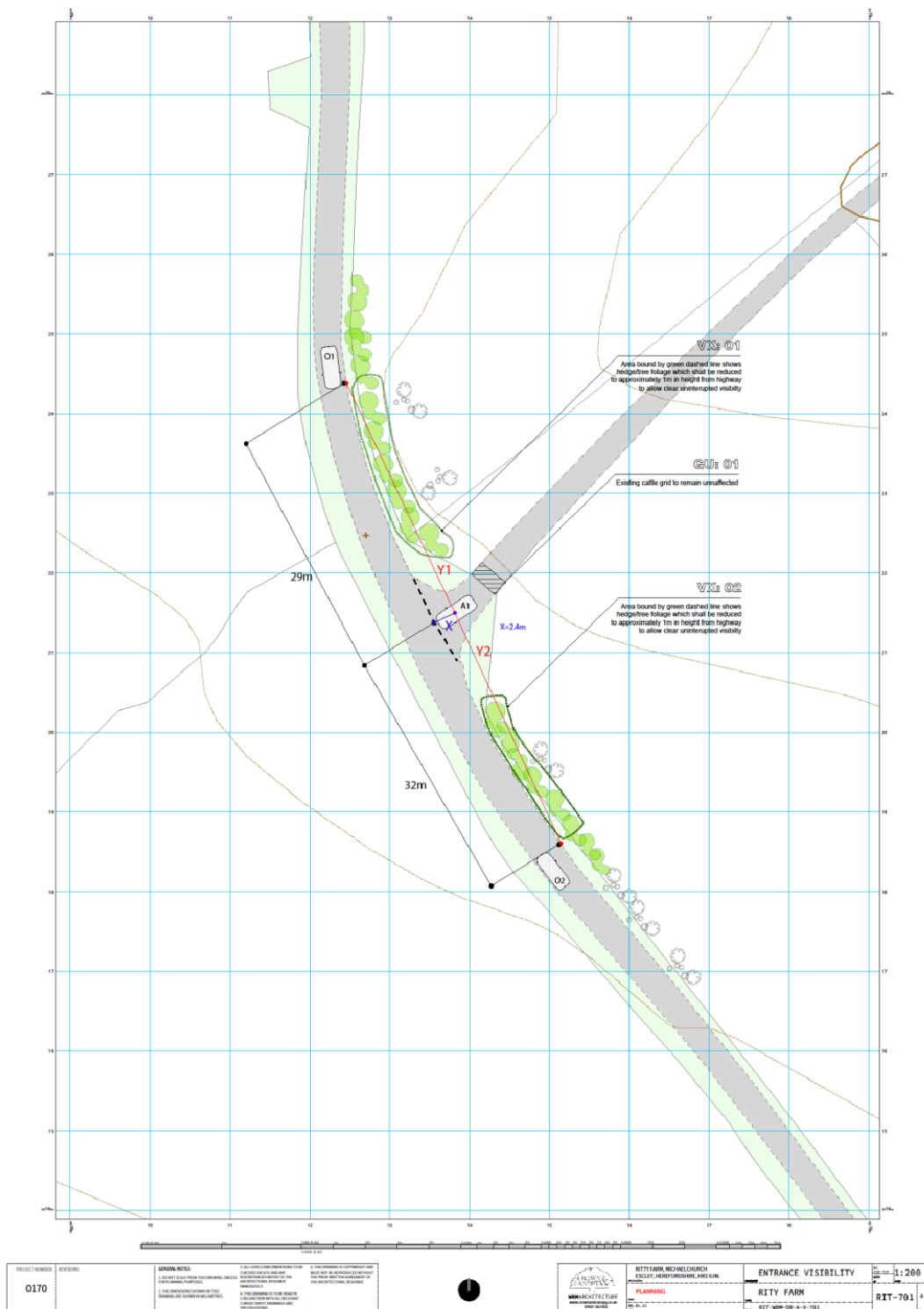


Image 7. Access plan showing existing entrance and proposed visibility splays



Full details of the track capacity are shown on the site plan RIT-101, this includes hammer head turning at the top end and parking for disabled access.

There will be no new roadways required for the development as the existing access road is sufficient and it is proposed that the carpark be developed using geo-grid mat to ensure minimal impact.

As advised in the Pre-App advice report, should modifications be required to the access construction and in the event that a full permission is granted, this specification will comply with the requirements of Herefordshire Council's Highways Specification for New Developments.

It is noted by the LHA that the *parking provision for the development is adequate for the scale of the residential units and the vehicle turning area is adequate for the scale of the dwelling.*

It notes that *based on the submitted information highways are unlikely to object to the proposals, subject to the above points being considered and addressed as part of the full application and any alterations not significantly changing the provisions already set out and assessed as adequate in this response.*

In order to avoid over-reliance on private car use, the provision of bicycles, secure bike storage and communication and encouragement of use of the public footpath network and nearby local services will be promoted inside the wagon, on the website and verbally to guests. There are two public footpaths leading to the wider path network and the popular Bridge Inn pub in Michaelchurch-Escley is within walking distance as are local shops. Once on-site, guests are able to enjoy many local attractions without the use of a car. Furthermore, hampers of local produce available to order will further reduce the need for car travel.





Image 8. Showing the entrance to the farm access track from the Highway.





Image 9. Entrance from site on to the highway





Image 10. Showing width and visibility from inside the entrance looking out to the Highway.

Emergency services will be able to access the land 24hrs per day using the established public highway access route. The entrance and carpark have been designed with 3.7m wide road entrance and a surface that will take over 12.5 tonnes axle load in compliance with Part B Section 11 Fire Fighting Vehicle Access. This route will always be kept clear as guests will be parking their vehicles in the allocated car parking area. This car park will also serve as emergency/refuge congregation point in the event of any incidences or emergencies. This information will be provided to guests on arrival with a detailed brief of procedure.

Guests arriving in private vehicles will park in the designated parking area outlined in the attached site layout plan and will walk across the track to the wagon.

12. FLOOD RISK

Although the site lies close to Escley Brook and the access track crosses the Brook and associated Flood Zone 3, as noted by the planning officer, *the siting of the cabin would appear to be wholly outside of any flood risk area associated with Escley Brook given the local topography and no surface water hazards are noted on the Environment Agency mapping. As such no Flood Risk Assessment is expected in support of a forthcoming application despite the site crossing Flood Zone 3.*

However, **Policy SD3 of the Core Strategy** states that *measures for sustainable water management will be required to be an integral element of new development in order to reduce flood risk, avoid an adverse impact on water quality, protect and enhance groundwater resources and to provide*



opportunities to enhance biodiversity, health and recreation. The sustainable drainage strategy the applicants intend to use, as advised by the Surface & Foul Water Drainage Strategy report ensures appropriate sustainable drainage systems to manage surface water and help achieve these aims.

13. CONCLUSION

This application has been formed due to the success of the existing holiday let at Ritty Farm, and the subsequent demand for more accommodation. The owners have experience in running tourism accommodation and through expansion, this will help them to develop a sustainable business that not only supports the farm, but the wider community as a whole.

The site is currently of low biodiversity value, therefore, as opposed to having a negative impact on the land, the proposal, through its tree planting and landscape enhancement plan, will actively promote biodiversity gains and improve the ecological value.

The structure itself is very low impact, it is entirely removable being built upon a wheeled chassis. This means that no foundations are required for development, and the structure will have minimal physical and amenity impact on the land.

The owners are passionate about protecting and preserving the land for wildlife, and are enthusiastic about this proposal as the ideal way to derive an income whilst dedicating the rest of their land to nature conservation.

