



DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT AND PLANNING STATEMENT

TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GLAMPING SITE AT

Bucklands Farm,
Brantridge Lane,
Balcombe,
West Sussex,
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This retrospective planning application is for 2no. glamping pods for overnight guest use, associated decking, pergolas, footpaths, solar panels, updates to existing permeable track and parking & turning area by each pod.

The pods have been connected to a private package treatment plant each, one to the west of the southern pod and one closely to the east of the northern pod. All hard landscaping was constructed from permeable materials and both pods have been surrounded by a gravel border to allow roof run-off to easily infiltrate the ground.

The chosen high-end glamping pods were constructed off-site by manufacturer Quality Pods Wales and delivered as a full unit ready for installation.

The application site is situated between the small villages of Handcross and Balcombe. The site location is easily accessible from across the country via both car and public transport.

The small-scale, sustainable development provides subtle and discreet countryside holiday accommodation for tourists visiting the area on short breaks and weekend stays. The site is in operation year-round, making it an excellent option for visitors to retreat and access everything the area has to offer in all seasons.

In designing the proposed site, Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP) (adopted 2018) and the Ansty, Staplefield & Brook Street Neighbourhood Plan (ASBSNP) (2015- 2031) were referenced, and the following policies were considered. It is believed that the proposal is compliant with each of the following policies:

- **DP1: Sustainable Economic Development**

This policy states that it allows for new small-scale economic development in the countryside including tourism (in accordance with Development in the Countryside policies). The proposed/retrospective glamping site was a diversification of an existing farming enterprise of Bucklands Farm. The proposal contributes to the local economy through increased visitor spend in local shops, restaurants, services, and tourist attractions.

- **DP12: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside**

The strategic objective of this policy is to protect the countryside and its valued landscapes while allowing proposals to create that encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle through the provision of first-class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations.

Glamping goes hand in hand with the countryside, it allows people to escape reality for a brief time and embrace and encourage outdoor countryside recreation and opportunities for exploration through walking and cycling as the policy states.

The site sits within Birchett's Wood - Ancient Woodland, however, the construction of the site was completed with great care and thought by only placing the pods and infrastructure within existing clearings and with the use of the existing tracks on site also. It is therefore expected that little to no impact was caused to the woodland itself and to revert the woodland to its original state would perhaps cause more impact than it did originally.

Due to the woodland coverage, the site cannot be seen by any surrounding landscapes or viewpoints, therefore it is not expected that the site currently cause any disruption to the countryside and landscape character. The site allows for countryside peaceful recreation while also encouraging guests to explore the site on foot or by bike.

The proposed development used an existing access track which was improved prior to the site opening to allow for woodland operations. Due to the existing infrastructure being used for the development, there will be no adverse impact on the landscape character.

As this is a retrospective application, the site has been up and running for a few years. This has allowed the applicants to begin actively managing and protecting this woodland and the other woodlands on the holding. This was something that had not been done for approximately 20 years prior. The applicants have been in constant communication with the Forestry Commission about improving the woodlands on the farm.

- **DP14: Sustainable rural development and the rural economy and DP19: Sustainable Tourism**

The accompanying Market Research document outlines the contribution that the proposed small-scale tourist development at Bucklands Farm will make to the local economy, supporting sustainable growth and the vitality of the rural economy.

As previously discussed, the existing access, tracks and clearings were used for the development. Therefore, there was no adverse impact to the site and the landscape character in accordance with DP12.

- **DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and AS3: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (ASBSNP)**

The site is located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, notably known for its scenic beauty and historic features. The development is seen as a small-scale addition to an existing built-up woodland that used the existing clearings on site. It is thought through the materials and non-invasive construction methods used, the pods integrate well into the setting and do not create any harm to the appearance and character of the landscape. Due to their location and existing screening on-site, the pods cannot be seen from the public road or other exterior views.

- **DP21: Transport and DP22: Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes**

The small-scale site is easily accessible from across the county with access to both local bus stops in Handcross and train stations in Balcombe, Haywards Heath and Three Bridges. The area is easily explored via the extensive PROW network that can be found a short distance from site.

Due to the small scale of site and the 1no car per pod that is typical of guests, it is not expected that they make any impact to the local highway network. As previously stated, the site is reachable from both Handcross and Balcombe via the accessible PROW that runs west to east to both villages and passes the site. The guests on site are highly encouraged to use this when getting around the area.

- **DP24: Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Activities**

The sustainable tourist accommodation at Bucklands Farm encourages visits from guests who seek out the quiet and restful time in the countryside as a tourist attraction or destination itself. The site aims to enhance the leisure and recreation activities currently in the area, providing visitors with an enriched experience, attracting a new demographic to the area and a financial boost to the area.

- **DP26: Character and Design**

Existing features have been used on site to provide safe vehicular access and adequate parking for the proposed glamping site. The improvements to these features positively contributed to creating a high-quality sense of place and clearly defined public and private realms. The identity and character of the site has been retained by only placing the development within existing open clearings and the amenity of nearby residences will be unaffected by the proposal. The existing pedestrian access to reach the site is safe, well-connected, legible, and accessible.

- **DP29: Noise, Air and Light Pollution**

It is thought that the level of noise and air pollution will remain at the current level present at the site due to the small-scale and minimal increase in traffic associated with the proposal. Wall-mounted lights with motion sensor and timers are featured on the pods for safety when walking at night. This type of lighting is proposed to minimise impact to wildlife and dark skies. See drawing 'Lighting Plan' for further information.

- **DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows and DP38: Biodiversity**

As the site has already been constructed and has been in operation making this a retrospective application, it must be noted that all development has been kept to the existing largely open clearings on site. During the construction of the site, the pods were carefully installed without any damage to the surrounding trees and no existing trees were felled. The pods were brought into site via the existing tracks and therefore no trees were harmed by the construction/delivery vehicle.

It must be noted that the applicant is aware that this site is within Birchett's Wood - ancient woodland. Under typical circumstances the site should be kept at a minimum 15m away from the woodland, as the site is already in place, this cannot be adhered. It is expected that if the site were to be requested to be reverted to its original state, the site would cause more harm in the removal than it did originally during construction.

- **DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction and DP40: Renewable Energy Schemes**

As previously stated, the site has been developed in the woodlands existing clearings, therefore no additional hardcore was needed or trees felled. The openness of the clearings allows plenty of light into the pod areas, meaning the PIR lights only come on in darkness and only for a brief period of time. The site also features solar panels. One set of solar panels for each pod which provides sufficient energy for the site.

The glamping pods were designed and manufactured to be energy efficient, using materials with a low environmental impact such as reclaimed wood, recycled materials or composite materials made from recycled content wherever possible. Additionally, locally sourced materials were used as much as possible. Low VOC (volatile organic compound) paints and finishes were employed to ensure good indoor air quality. Floors and walls are well-insulated with high-quality insulation to minimise heat loss

during colder seasons and reduce the need for heating or cooling. Double glazing was be used throughout to also reduce heat loss. LED light fittings were installed as standard throughout.

- **DP41: Flood Risk and Drainage**

National flood maps indicate that the site access and parking areas are at low-medium risk of surface water flooding. However, the site features two existing ponds on site that provide adequate SUDs. The pods were positioned outside of any areas at risk of flooding with them being places upon permeable gravel bases to allow surface water drainage

National Planning Policy Framework: Supporting a prosperous rural economy

88. 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, beautiful 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; and d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses, and places of worship.

89. 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.



3.1 Location

The site is situated approximately 2.5 miles each way between Balcombe to the east and Handcross to the west.

The site is accessible via private car, a public right of way (PROW) reaching from Handcross, past the site and connecting to Balcombe as well as bus links via Handcross and Balcombe and by train Balcombe alone.

The main roads that are used to access the site is Brantridge Lane, B2110 and the A23 through Handcross.

Many tourist spots and attractions are within a suitable travel distance to the site such as the Ouse Valley Viaduct, Leonardslee Lakes and Gardens, and many National Trust sites such as Nymans and the Wings Aviation Museum found directly outside of the site. It is perfectly suited for visitors looking to enjoy the natural beauty of this area and the proposal will create a significant economic benefit to the surrounding area and local businesses.



Figure 1. Aerial view of site location. Source: Google Maps

3.2 Proposed Site Information

In the MSDP, the proposed site lies outside of any settlement boundaries. As such, the principal designation governing the site is 'Countryside.' It must be noted that the site does also lie within Birchett's Wood - Ancient Woodland and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The proposed site is generally flat with the gradient running north to south with the pods being located following the existing tracks in front of both of the existing ponds.

As the site is situated within the ancient woodland, the existing tree coverage means that the site is not visible from any exterior views. No trees were felled with a diameter at breast height over 8cm during the site construction.

The site uses an existing entrance and track through the Bucklands Farm and past the Wings Aviation Museum found on *Brantridge Lane*. Guests then follow the existing track to the woodland and follow the woodland tracks themselves to the pods suited on higher ground in front of each of the ponds.

The nearest neighbouring structure is Ditton Place, located approximately 215m southeast of the south pod. The site does not impact Ditton Place as it cannot be seen from within the woodland due to an extensive tree screen between.



Figure 2. Aerial view of site. Source: Google Maps

3.3 Site Access

The glamping site is reached by following A23, B2110, Brantridge Land and the unnamed track through Bucklands Farm. It is felt that the additional traffic generated by the glamping site does not negatively impact other road users due to the already high traffic through the area for the Farm itself and the local Museum.

Visibility is good in both directions from the site entrance onto the public road where the access lies perpendicular, as can be seen in figures 3 and 4 below.



Figure 3. Facing south on public road.



Figure 4. Facing north on public road.

3.4 Site Photos



View 1. Facing east overlooking south pod and decking .



View 2. Solar panels located northwest of the south pod.



View 3. Rear view of the south pod and deck.



View 4. South pod footpath down to pond deck.



View 5. Facing south overlooking pond deck.



View 6. Facing east towards south pod.



View 7. Existing track from south pod.



View 8. South pod deck and pergola.



View 9. Facing north towards north pod, decking, pergola and footpath from pond.

3.5 Flood Risk

It has been identified from flood maps that a small section of the site lies in low zone with regard to surface water but no risk for river, and sea flooding. It is therefore anticipated that a flood risk assessment is not required.

The existing tracks and all hard landscaping was constructed from permeable materials to allow water to freely infiltrate the ground. Likewise, a pebble border around the pods was provided for roof run-off. See drawing 'Drainage Plan' for additional information.



Figure 5. Map of Surface Water Flood Risk. Source: gov.uk



Figure 6. Map of Flood Risk from rivers and sea. Source: gov.uk

3.6 Public Rights of Way

No public rights of way were affected by this proposal both during construction and after completion.

However, there are many public right of way (PROW) located near the proposed site. Views from the right of way are not affected by this proposal.

This public right-of-way footpath and several others in the surrounding area will allow guests to easily explore the area on foot reducing the need for cars. These routes are already promoted within the guestbook to encourage use. The main PROW of the area can be seen running from Handcross to Balcombe.

Layers	
 Footpath, Bridleway, Byway	
 National Trails / Coastal Path	
 Right to Roam	
 Cycle Network	

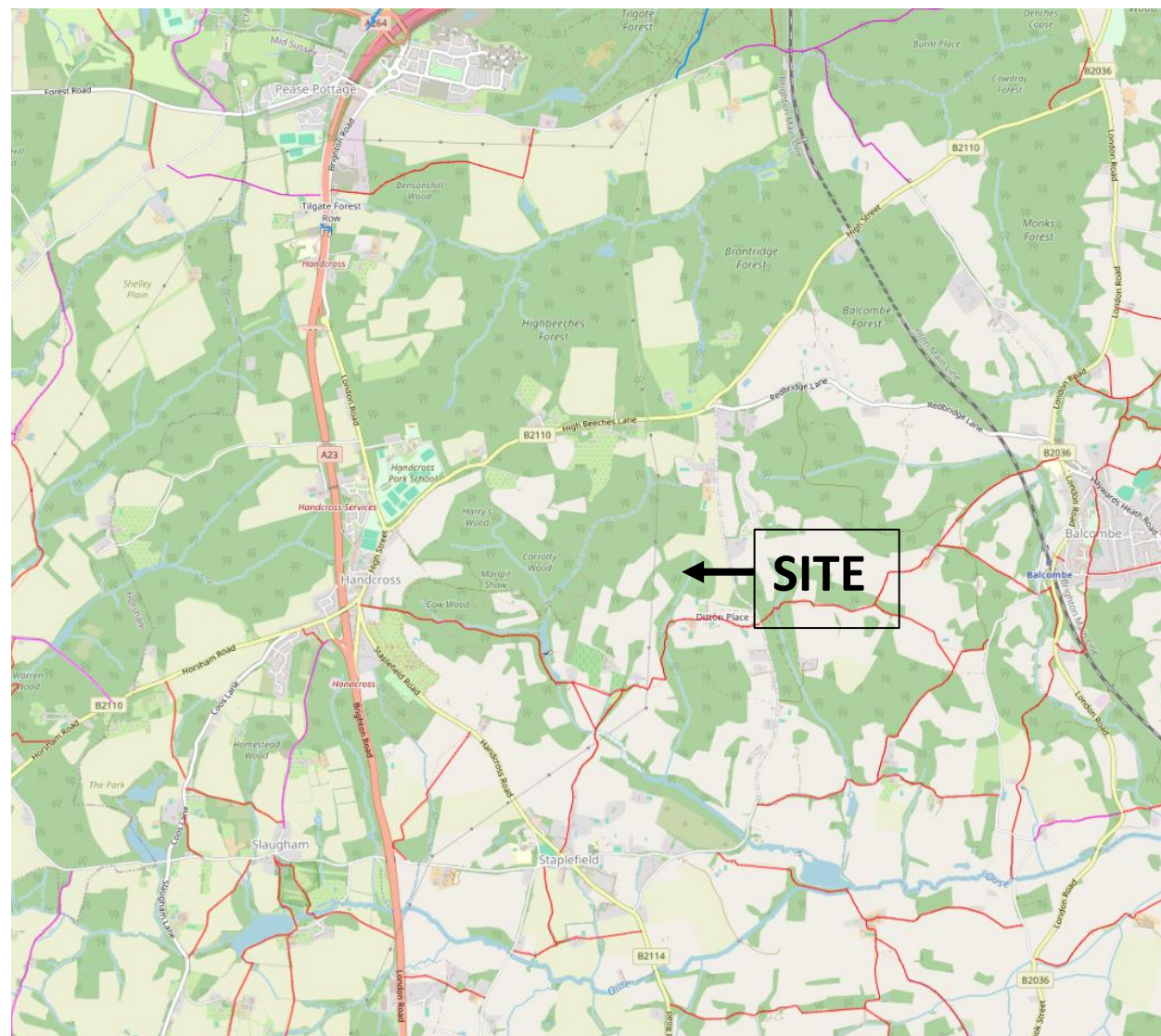


Figure 7. Map of Public rights of way . Source: footpathmap.co.uk

3.7 Justification for Proposed Use

The proposed glamping site offers contemporary, luxury holiday accommodation to visitors within a suitable travel distance of Handcross, Balcombe, Crawley, Horsham and further afield across the country, thus being suitable for weekend trips and short stays.

The area and surroundings are rich in tourist attractions such as the Ouse Valley Viaduct, Leonardslee Lakes and Gardens, and many National Trust sites such as Nymans and the Wings Aviation Museum found at the beginning of the site access track within the same freehold title. Nearby towns offer plenty of cafes, restaurants, and local shops for guests to visit and as such, the proposal already helps to create an economic benefit to local businesses and services. The proposed accommodation allows visitors to spend time outdoors to relax in a natural setting as well as explore the surrounding area.

Glamping installations require minimal groundwork and non-harmful construction practices. We, therefore, believe the proposed small-scale glamping pods, built from natural materials, will provide an ecologically viable accommodation solution, suited to the area.

The concept of luxury glamping is now gaining popularity throughout the UK, with standards and guests' expectations on the rise. This site is intended to be amongst the best available in the area and provide an exciting new alternative, offering guests a secluded retreat in nature and high-quality, modern glamping accommodation. As this is a retrospective application, the applicants are already aware that the business model works as they already have significant views, bookings and customer reviews.



4.1 Proposed Layout

From the existing access through Bucklands Farm on Brantridge Lane, guests turn onto the existing track and drive south to meet the existing woodland access tracks. This then leads lead guests into the site with permeable parking areas at each pod.

From the entrance to the woodland, guests either turn east or continue south to their designated pod overlooking the ponds.

As mentioned, the very flat, gradual gradient runs from north to south with the pods tucked in existing clearings and surrounding trees.

Alongside both ponds, a small deck was constructed to allow guests to enjoy and relax in a quiet secluded area.

In the upkeep of the woodland and site, the applicants regularly commission Quantified Tree Risk Assessments (QTRA) to ensure proper safety for the guests and that the woodland is being maintained to a high standard. See the most recent QTRA attached with this application.

See drawing 'Proposed Layout Plan' for further information.

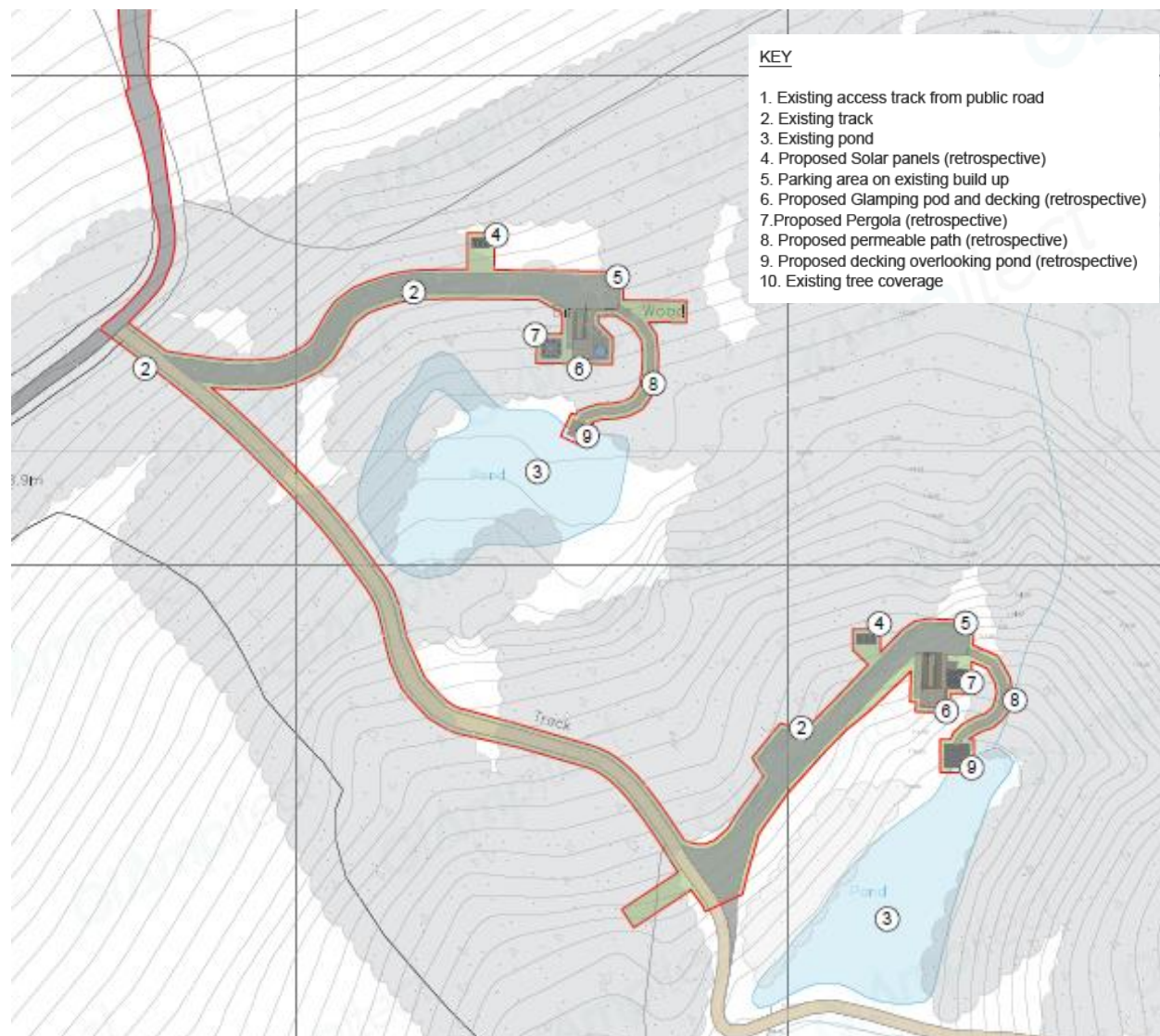


Figure 8. Retrospective Layout Plan

4.2 Landscaping

The proposed site has a slight downward slope running from north to south. Some minor levelling was required to create suitable footings for the pods (small slab footings). Broken ground was re-instated (turfed where required). No existing landscaping, shrubs or trees were felled during or after the sites construction.

The intention is to maintain the existing topography of the site, thus preventing the need for any retaining structures. The pods were installed on adjacent ground levels and therefore at varying levels relative to each other.

4.3 Drainage Strategy

Each pod is connected to a package water treatment plant located west of the southern pod and immediately east of the northern pod. See drawing 'Drainage Plan' for further information.

The existing vehicular track and parking / turning area was already built up prior to construction with a porous build-up on free-draining stone. All new footpaths were constructed with woodchip.

All pods have a 250mm wide by a min 200mm deep gravel border to all draining sides.

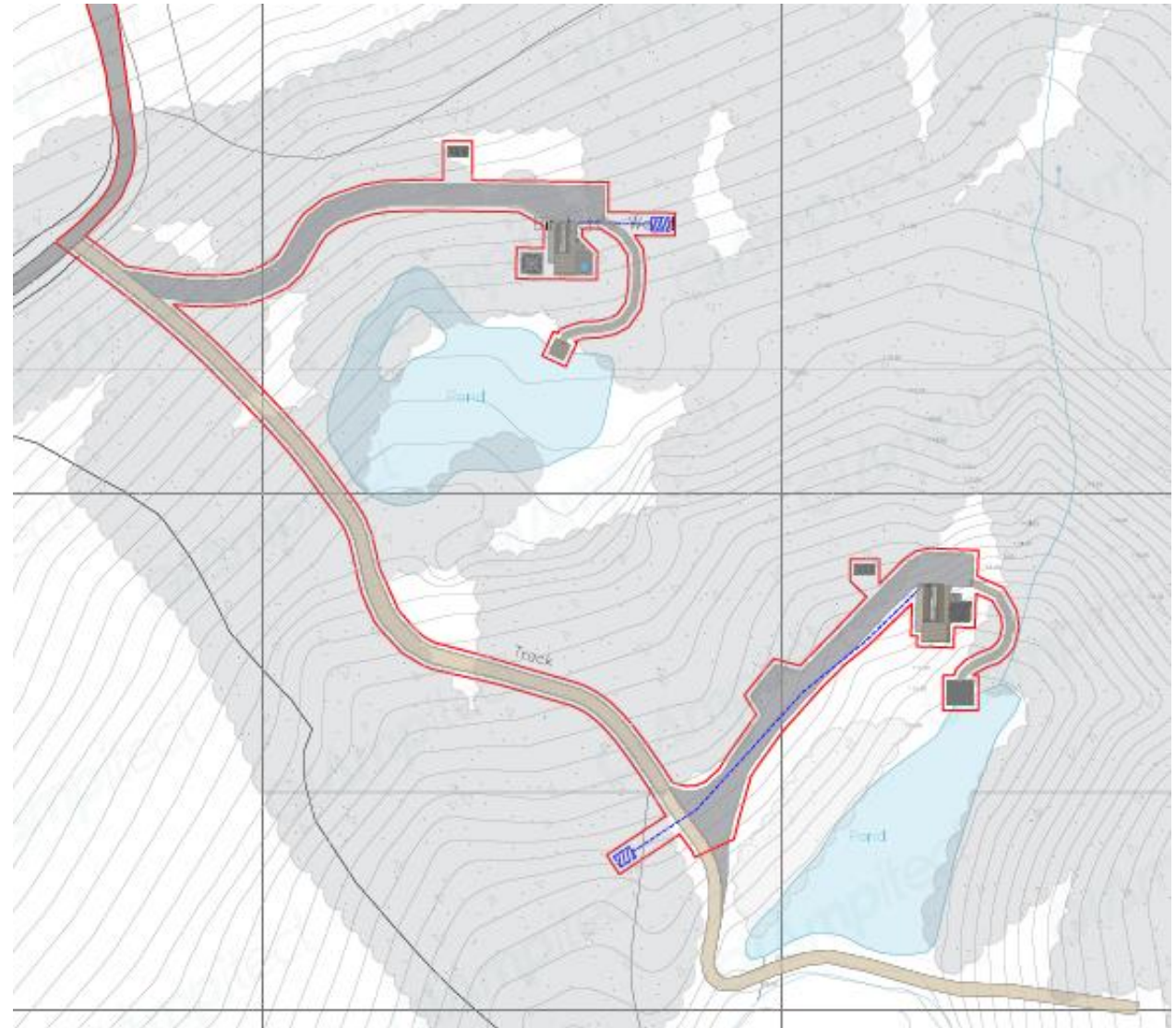


Figure 9. Retrospective Drainage Plan

4.4 Lighting Strategy

4no. LED lights with PIR sensor are provided on the pods for safety when walking at night.

The chosen lighting minimises the effects on local wildlife, not to cause disruption to neighbours and is suitable for use in dark sky areas.

Benefits of low-level lighting bollards:

- LED mains are wired.
- LED bulbs installed into the lamps are in such a manner that they shine downwards onto cascading reflectors, keeping all light at low level.
- Integrated PIR sensor, keeping light levels low and only on when required.
- Range 2-8metres, set at 5m as shown.
- Lighting duration (5 seconds to 6 minutes) are configurable.
- Detects movement at an angle of 90 degrees.

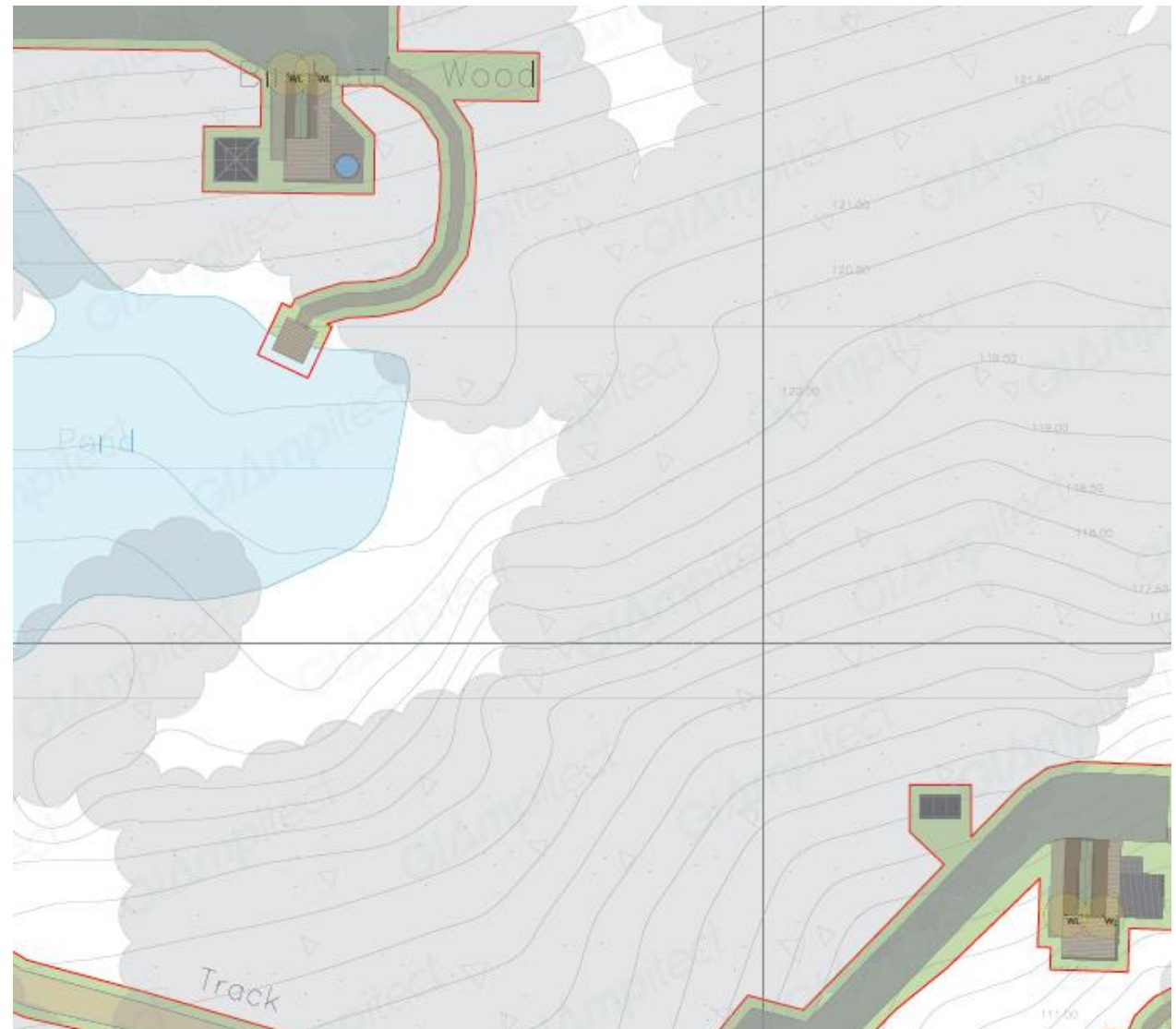


Figure 10. Lighting Plan

4.5 Proposed Units

2no. high-quality glamping pods were installed and constructed off-site and delivered as full units by manufacturer Quality Pods Wales. See drawing 'Pod Plan and Elevations' for more details.

The pods are considered to be a temporary structure and has been designed to meet the specifications to be defined as a caravan under the Caravan Act. It is a single-story unit (approx. 3m tall) so no restriction of neighbouring views will occur. Since the pods will be clad in natural materials, they will also be in harmony with the surrounding landscape and will naturally weather over time.



Figure 11. Pod drawings

4.6 Use

The site is be operated as a typical (year-round) holiday let, with the glamping pods being rented out on a per-nightly basis. Patrons typically tend to be couples and small families as the chosen target markets by the site operators. Party groups are not permitted.

The site is marketed as a peaceful and relaxing retreat in nature, which should mean noise from guests is not a consideration, with minimal likelihood of noise and disruption to neighbouring properties and road users etc.

There is no intention to use the units for long-term lease / permanent residences. The compact footprint of the pods would not be suited to this in any case.

Land Usage Item	Area Used	% Of Site
Ownership Area (Blue Line Boundary)	544,809 m ²	-
Site Area (Red Line Boundary)	8,684 m ²	1.6 % (of blue line)
Glamping Pods (2no. units)	45 m ²	0.5 %
Existing track, parking and turning area	1600 m ²	18 %

4.7 Installation

4.7.1 Stage 1 – Access

The minimal increase in traffic associated with the glamping site has negligible impact on the surrounding area with a maximum of 2no. vehicles on-site at any one time. The existing access is of suitable condition and width to provide easy and safe vehicle access. The existing access also provided initial access for the installation of plant and services and then became the main visitor access as well as provide access for any maintenance vehicles when the site is in operation.

4.7.2 Stage 2 - Groundwork

The slightly sloping gradient across the site meant some minor groundwork was required to level the ground for the footings of the units. The existing topography will be retained, with no retaining walls or structures required.

All units are connected to a package water treatment plant. See drawing 'Proposed Drainage Plan' for further information. Service ducting was laid for power from the solar panels to the pods, and water as required. All service installations and groundwork were conducted by local contractors. The pipework on site has existed for approximately 20 years for gamekeeping activities. The site uses portable 4G Wi-Fi boxes for guest use, so no telecoms were required.

4.7.3 Stage 3 – Unit Install

2no. pods were prefabricated off-site and delivered as a full unit, ready to connect to services. By manufacturing the pods off-site, construction waste was kept to a minimum and a high-quality finish can be achieved more easily than traditional construction. The choice of glamping pods aims to minimise disruption to the site as much as possible due to their temporary nature.

4.7.4 Stage 4 – Roads, Parking & Clean up

No more plant/transport access was required. All existing hardcore tracks were already constructed with permeable materials to avoid the use of concrete/tarmac.

Finally, a total clear-out of the site was conducted to ensure no leftover waste from the build stage was left. All cleaning waste was recycled where possible and safely disposed of otherwise.



The glamping pods were designed and manufactured to be energy efficient, using materials with a low environmental impact such as reclaimed wood, recycled materials or composite materials made from recycled content wherever possible. Additionally, locally sourced materials were used as much as possible. Low VOC (volatile organic compound) paints and finishes were employed to ensure good indoor air quality. Floors and walls are well-insulated with high-quality insulation to minimise heat loss during colder seasons and reduce the need for heating or cooling. Double glazing was used throughout to also reduce heat loss. LED light fittings are installed as standard throughout.

Water-saving sanitary fittings and appliances within the units deliver water efficiency to the site. A sustainable surface water drainage strategy (SuDS) was implemented across the site with all hard landscaping to be constructed from permeable materials to allow water to freely infiltrate the ground without the need of a dedicated surface water drainage system. Minimal surface water run-off from the pods is discharged into pebble borders around the units.

Appropriate implementation of measures minimised environmental impacts arising from any site works; the site was constructed with efficient construction methods as stated in Stage 3 above thus reducing any waste and carefully considered groundworks resulted in no removals required from the site. The site was designed to integrate harmoniously with the surrounding natural environment to minimise disruption and preserve natural features.

An efficient operational waste management and recycling strategy is conducted by the operator as required by the council. The waste and recycling bins are located near to the parking area for easy access by guests. The site utilises commercial waste management with COXX SKIPS.

The proposed glamping site will provide a new and exciting accommodation option for Balcombe and the surrounding area, offering a unique relaxing and sustainable stay in nature. Demand for this type of rural accommodation is high throughout the country, which has also been shown to be true of other glamping sites within this part of the country.

The development has increased footfall for local businesses and through correct marketing, should increase the length of time tourists remain in the local area. This will be beneficial to the local economy including tourist attractions, restaurants, other businesses, and local services. The Applicant has built relationships with local businesses in the area to offer their goods and services to guests, including taxi services, shops, cafes, and restaurants to name but a few. The operator promotes these services within the pods, along with providing the guests with local knowledge of the many beauty spots to visit, allowing them to connect with nature and the surrounding area.

The operator also used local businesses where possible to conduct groundworks and installation of services, using local suppliers and local labour. The development also supports local employment with the creation of two part-time roles for site cleaning and maintenance.

The construction of a glamping site in this location using glamping pods with a small footprint and of a temporary nature was achieved in less time, with less intrusive construction methods and less environmental impact, than traditional permanent tourist accommodation builds require. This is clearly favourable in an area of countryside rich in natural beauty.

Through a thoughtful and considered approach, the design for this proposal emphasises the integration of a small-scale glamping development with the natural landscape to ensure a comfortable and enjoyable experience for all guests.

The project aims to promote sustainability and a harmonious connection between the built environment and the rural surroundings. Based on the points discussed throughout this document, it is reasonable to suggest that the proposed glamping accommodation is warranted in this location, to cater for increasing visitor demand, without sacrificing the area's beauty, ecology, or heritage assets. It is believed that this has already been achieved with the fantastic response from past guest reviews.