

CHANGE OF USE OF LAND, AND ERECTION OF SHEPHERDS HUT TO FORM HOLIDAY LET ACCOMMODATION

LAND ADJACENT TO SYMNELLS, GOLDWELL LANE, ALDINGTON, TN257DX

## + PLANNING STATEMENT

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KENT **DESIGN** STUDIO  
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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This statement has been prepared by Kent Design Studio in support of a planning application for the change of use of land and erection of a shepherd's hut to provide holiday let accommodation on land adjacent to Symnells, Goldwell Lane, Aldington, TN25 7DX.

The proposed holiday let would be a short term let for visitors to the area, enabling them to see local attractions and provide additional income to local tourism. The proposal is directed at couples and singles looking for a country escape.

This statement sets out the key parameters, the site context, policy position, material considerations and proposed development to ascertain its viability and present a planning case for granting planning permission.



+ Aerial view of Site (Google Maps)

## 2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

### Immediate

The application site lies to the west of Goldwell Lane and north of Aldington village. Currently in agricultural use, the land contains a small timber-clad barn and benefits from an existing vehicular access at the northeast corner from Goldwell Lane. The boundaries are defined by mature trees, established hedgerows, and post-and-wire fencing, which collectively screen much of the site from the public highway and surrounding viewpoints.

The site falls within the administrative area of Ashford Borough Council and is located within the Stour Catchment Area. The surrounding landscape is predominantly rural, characterised by farmland, scattered agricultural buildings, and occasional residential properties. No additional designations apply to the site.

### Surrounding

The wider setting is rural with an undulating landscape and dispersed patterns of development beyond the nearby villages. The site sits within open countryside and lies within a designated Dark Skies area.

Aldington village is located approximately 0.6 miles away and provides a range of local amenities including farm shops, public houses, and regular bus services offering connections to nearby towns and villages. The larger centres of Ashford and Folkestone lie within a 20-mile radius, offering extensive retail, leisure, and healthcare services.

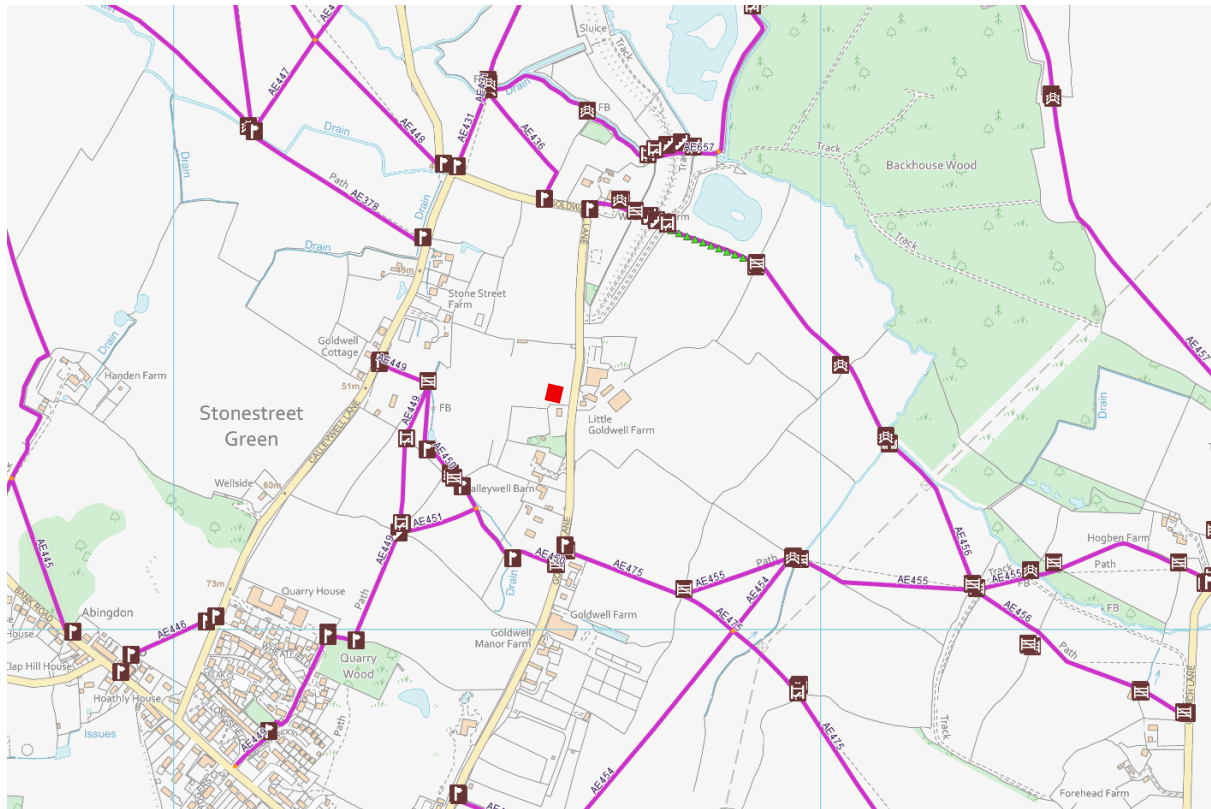
Public transport connections are good, with Ashford International Railway Station providing services to Folkestone, Canterbury, and Hastings, as well as high-speed links to London St Pancras and onward connections to the Eurostar, supporting accessibility for visitors from further afield.

The site is also well-positioned relative to several Public Rights of Way (PROWs), offering convenient access to countryside walking routes for future occupants or visitors.



+ Site Photos





+ Map showing Public Rights of Way (Kent County Council)

### 3.0 PROPOSAL

The application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of land and the siting of a temporary shepherd’s hut to provide self-contained holiday-let accommodation.

The proposed shepherd’s hut will be located within the existing agricultural field and will provide a high-quality, single-unit holiday retreat suitable for couples and singles people who in turn will be supporting the local rural tourism economy.

The hut will be rectangular in form and finished in a traditional agricultural style, incorporating corrugated cladding and a curved corrugated steel roof. The chosen palette of materials and muted colours will ensure the structure integrates sympathetically with its countryside surroundings, resulting in a modest and non-obtrusive addition to the landscape.

The hut will be constructed on wheels, positioned on a level compacted Type 1 stone base, with steps providing access to a small area of raised timber decking at the entrance. The unit will measure approximately 3m x 6m, with a maximum ridge height of around 3.4m.

The non-permanent structure is proposed to be sited along the southern boundary of the field (subject to change of use), offering a quiet, secluded setting with attractive views across the surrounding countryside.

The Shepherd’s Hut will provide adequate accommodation including a built-in bed, kitchenette, log burner, WC and shower. These facilities ensure the unit functions as a comfortable, self-contained holiday let while maintaining a modest scale.

The site benefits from an existing vehicular access off Goldwell Road. Sufficient space is available within the landholding to provide off-road parking for one vehicle, together with appropriate cycle storage, bin storage, and private outdoor amenity space for the occupants.

Water and electricity are already present on site and the proposal seeks to install a new Klargester sewerage treatment plant, as indicated on the proposed block plan.

Given the modest scale and low-intensity nature of the proposal, the development would not result in any adverse impacts on the amenity of surrounding residents.

## 4.0 PLANNING POLICY

### National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and puts "the presumption in favour of sustainable development" at the heart of the planning system. The following chapters are relevant to the proposal:

- Chapter 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- Chapter 4 – Decision making
- Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Chapter 16 - Conserving and enhancing the built environment

### Local Plan

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that where the Development Plan contains relevant policies, applications for development which are in accordance with these policies should be allowed unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) are material considerations.

Throughout this section, the planning proposals for the site are addressed in the context of the Development Plan for Ashford Borough Council. The relevant documents comprise:

- Ashford Borough Local Plan 2030

### Ashford Borough Council Local Plan 2030

SP1- Strategic Objectives  
SP6 – Promoting High Quality Design  
ENV3a – Landscape Design and Character  
ENV4 – Light Pollution and Promoting Dark Skies  
TRA3a – Parking Standards for Residential Development  
EMP11 - Tourism

### Supplementary Planning Documents:

Residential Parking and Design Guidance SPD 2010  
Dark Skies SPD 2014

## 6.0 PLANNING ANALYSIS

This section of the report sets out an assessment of the proposed development against the relevant planning policy, material considerations and guidance. A topic-based approach is taken in respect of the prevailing planning considerations, with due regard to the planning policies at National and Local level.

### Principle of Development

The NPPF is supportive of the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business, agricultural businesses and enterprise in rural areas and sustainable rural tourism that benefits businesses, communities and visitors in rural areas, and respect the character of the countryside. This includes supporting the provision and expansion of tourist facilities in appropriate locations.

This is endorsed in policy EMP11 of the Ashford Local Plan which seeks to encourage a wide range of new facilities. Paragraph 7.94 of the preamble to policy EMP11, states that *"rural tourism development is also encouraged in order to take advantage of the Borough's large areas of attractive countryside, where this would not be harmful to the character of the environment that attracts tourists in the first instance."*

Whilst the site is isolated in terms of distance to the village and local attractions the scale of development proposed is small and is not significantly isolated from other built development. It is therefore of a suitably small scale which is acceptable and is consistent with the aim of widening the breadth of tourist accommodation opportunities within the borough.

### *Holiday Let Justification*

Given the above, it is considered that the principle of new rural tourism facilities is well accepted within both local and national planning policy as a way of providing the opportunity for the diversification of the rural economy.

The proposal seeks to establish a high-quality, low-key self-catering holiday accommodation in a tranquil rural setting, designed to attract visitors seeking a peaceful retreat within an attractive natural environment.

The site lies within the countryside, where planning policy supports the sustainable growth of tourism through well-located, small-scale facilities, provided the location is appropriate. In this instance, the site offers the ideal balance of seclusion and accessibility, with good proximity to public services, which is essential for holiday accommodation. The location also benefits from strong transport links, including easy access to coastal towns such as Folkstone, Hastings and Rye, and direct train services to London via nearby stations. This level of accessibility enhances the viability and appeal of the proposal from visitors around the UK, but also guests travelling to and from the near continent.

The proposed holiday let would:

- Provide self-catering accommodation for up to two guests;
- Operate for approximately 20 weeks per year, with occupancy spread across the seasons;
- Be advertised via multiple platforms to maximise visibility and appeal;
- Include on-site car parking and amenity space
- Be aimed at couples and single visitors attending local events, exploring the wider area or visiting friends and family.
- Located in the heart of the Kent countryside, a great location to explore the small villages and scenic landscape with a rich and cultured heritage



- The site is also well-located for walking and cycling, with Public Rights of Way (PROWs) in proximity, and a rural road network well-suited to outdoor recreation.

The surrounding area offers a rich array of tourism attractions, including but not limited to:

- South of England Rare Breed Centre
- Woodchurch Windmill
- Woodchurch Vineyard
- Wye National Nature Reserve
- Ashford Designer Outlet
- Kent Downs National Landscape
- Numerous golf courses and fishing facilities
- Range of walking and cycling routes through Ashford's Green Corridor
- Kent and East Sussex Railway
- National Trust and English Heritage locations, including Smallhythe Place and Sissinghurst Castle
- Port Lympne Safari Park

The holiday let would be marketed through a range of advertising sources and mainly as a base for tourists wanting to explore the local attractions the Kentish countryside has to offer. With this in mind, we consider there to be a much wider benefit to surrounding villages and services along these routes.

Tourism plays a vital role in the local economy, and this development would contribute to building a strong, responsive, and competitive rural economy by:

- Attracting visitors likely to support local businesses and services;
- Offering an accommodation option that aligns with local tourism strategies;
- Creating a niche, sustainable business opportunity for the applicant;
- Promoting eco-friendly, nature-based tourism in line with national rural development objectives.

The proposed holiday let would thus provide measurable economic and social benefits without compromising the rural character or tranquillity of the area and its small-scale, sustainable nature ensures minimal environmental impact while delivering maximum local benefit.

In summary, this proposal offers a sustainably located, well-managed, and high-quality holiday accommodation that enhances the local tourism offer, supports the rural economy, and respects the natural environment in which it sits.

It is therefore submitted that the proposed development aligns with both local planning policy and national tourism objectives and represents a positive contribution to the sustainable growth of rural tourism in the region.

#### Visual Amenity

Given the small-scale nature of the development, the proposed shepherd's hut rural form and traditional appearance would sit comfortably within its countryside context. Its modest proportions ensure it would not give rise to any unacceptable environmental or landscape impacts. The hut would not appear visually intrusive or prominent within the open rural setting and would therefore have only a minimal effect on the landscape character, in accordance with Policy ENV3a of the Local Plan.

Owing to its discreet siting and the established trees, hedgerows and boundary screening, the hut would not appear dominant or readily perceptible from publicly accessible viewpoints, including the local street scene. The proposal is considered to contribute positively to the character, appearance, and distinctiveness of the area while making an efficient, low-impact use of the land.

#### Residential Amenity

The structure and materials of the shepherd's hut are sympathetic to the surrounding agricultural landscape, ensuring the development is appropriate to the local character and context. Its rural traditional design also ensures that it sits comfortably within the wider setting that is shared by the nearby Grade II listed building.

Given the hut's modest scale, simple form, and appropriate siting, the proposal can be accommodated without resulting in any harm to the character, appearance, or setting of the listed building, in line with Policy ENV13.

The hut will not appear incongruous or overbearing and will not result in any loss of privacy, green space, or outlook for surrounding residential properties. Overall, the proposal is considered to preserve the amenity of the area.

#### Parking and Highways

The development will utilise the existing vehicular access serving the site and provide parking for one car. A single one-bed holiday unit will generate only a very low level of traffic and is not expected to lead to any unacceptable intensification of the access or surrounding highway network.

The proposal is therefore not considered to raise any concerns regarding highway safety, nor would it result in adverse impacts on the function of the local road network. The scheme is fully compliant with Policy TRA3a of the Local Plan.

#### Landscaping and Biodiversity Net Gain

The site benefits from established trees, hedgerows, and fencing, providing strong natural screening and integrating the development within its countryside context. The proposal will not require the removal of any existing landscaping features, and measures will be taken to retain and protect these features to avoid harm to existing biodiversity and wildlife habitats.

The shepherd's hut will sit on a level compacted Type 1 stone base, occupying less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat. As such, the proposal qualifies for the de-minimis exemption under the Biodiversity Net Gain regulations, meaning the statutory BNG requirement does not apply.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

This Planning Statement has been prepared by Kent Design Studio in support of an application seeking full planning permission for the change of use of land and the erection of a shepherd's hut to provide holiday let accommodation on land adjacent to Symnells, Goldwell Lane, Aldington, TN25 7DX.

The proposal would deliver a range of social and economic benefits, including support for the borough's rural tourism sector and increased visitor spending within local businesses and services. The development



has been carefully designed and sited to ensure that it would not result in any harm to neighbouring residential amenity, highway safety, or the surrounding landscape character.

The site's proximity to existing attractions, public rights of way, and local village services makes it well-placed to meet the continuing demand for high-quality rural visitor accommodation within the area.

In light of the above, and when assessed against the material considerations, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the Ashford Local Plan, it is respectfully requested that the proposal is viewed positively and that planning permission is granted.

