



Supporting Statement

The proposal is for a change of use of the land at Watermill through the provision of a luxury shepherds hut for 2 visitors in the location already approved for the construction of a large shed.

1. Strategic Fit with the current Local Plan

The provision will have 'green' credentials and provide a high quality niche tourism product that meets contemporary visitor expectations - as such it meets Local Plan Policy 4 by **demonstrably** improving the quality of the existing tourism offer, especially in this area of the island. It will appeal to a new type of visitor described in the **Blue Sail Report 2011** as '*early adopters, they're self-sufficient and outdoorsy, and they're responsible consumers*'.

Glamping has been one of the fastest growing sectors in global tourism and is underserved not just on Scilly but across the world. Even non-campers probably know that glamping – or glamorous camping – has been on the up and up in recent years. Bookings for camping types such as tipis, yurts, wigwams, camping pods, gypsy caravans, shepherd's huts and other styles of quirky camping have shot up. Research from Google's Digital Garage, a free online training service for businesses, shows an 118% year-on-year rise in Google searches for glamping (May 2016).

'The glamping trend has been driven by the millennial desire to seek out natural, more unique experiences without sacrificing comfort. This mirrors the "flash packing" concept that has seen the grimy backpacker of yore replaced with a tech-heavy young traveler that is connected via multiple devices as they travel around the world. Comfort is no longer sacrificed, and that luxury trend will continue as these travelers enter peak earning years'

Tnooz.com

'Cool camping and glamping holidays are becoming more popular now that families are cutting back on certain luxuries, and with the holiday chaos felt after volcano ash clouds, airport strikes, freak weather and natural disasters, many people are deciding to stay closer to home, or at least to have a greater number of their holidays there. The buzz word of course is camping 'staycations'. In the UK alone Visit England reported an 11% increase in this type of trip in Great Britain in 2011. This may not seem like much, but it is when you

consider most other tourist businesses are in decline then it's quite a bit of growth. However, just because families are cutting back on their spending doesn't mean they don't want to experience something a bit special or unique.

*In addition to this we are also seeing a growing desire for authenticity and genuineness amongst consumers and the business they interact with. This is demonstrated by the growing popularity of local produce markets, farmers markets, organic food, local crafts, Fair Trade, and people generally becoming more earth friendly and considerate of their surroundings. Time with family and friends outdoors amongst nature supports this fundamental desire, as does using and supporting small locally based businesses. Currently both these elements make up the foundations of the niche glamping and cool camping industry, which is possibly one of the reasons why it is seeing such growth at times of financial difficulty'. **Inspiredcamping.com***

'Quality accommodation is a critical element of the visitor experience and is integral to our national strategy which outlines our commitment to championing quality and excellent customer service in England. In the past 10 years the growth in the glamping sector has been phenomenal. We are pleased to announce our new Glamping Scheme which replaces our Alternative Accommodation Scheme. Following feedback from operators and research into the latest trends, we have updated the criteria for VisitEngland's glamping accreditation and introduced a new Gold Award for those who offer exceptionally high quality facilities and services.' **Viscountess Penelope Cobham CBE, chairman of VisitEngland**

It also has the potential to extend the visitor season. We have spoken to other businesses who have developed similar small scale proposals. www.dimpsey.co.uk located in an AONB area in Somerset say that they are at 90% capacity in the winter months. Another customer of Blackdown Shepherds Huts has commented, 'We have people booked in for November and December, and some returners who want to experience it with the log burner. It really is a hut for all seasons'.

Its materials and construction fit with the principles in the Design Guide (see separate Design and Access Statement).

2. Strategic Fit with the National Policy Framework and the developing new Local Plan

The Council of the Isles of Scilly is reviewing its current Local Plan which was adopted in 2005. Although the Plan does not expire until 2020, its policies were only intended to cover a period of 10 years to 2015 before being reviewed. It is also an 'old style' local plan and was not produced in conformity with more recent national planning policy requirements such as the 2004 Planning Act 2 nor with the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2013**. The National Planning Policy Framework states that:

'Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:

- *support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres'*

There is general guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework and part of paragraph 28 is broadly supportive of this type of proposal providing it respects the character of the countryside and provides tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres. This end of the island is woefully undiscovered and this small scale, beautifully made and simple accommodation in this landscaped setting provides the high quality and sustainable tourist product that the island requires. We believe that this proposal will increase use of businesses at this end of the island including private hire taxis, local produce retailers, bike hire, restaurants, cafes, Holy Vale Vineyard and other accommodation providers.

Similar mainland businesses have promoted their local area, local producers, local restaurants – and the sense of 'getting away from it all'. Our research also shows that this type of accommodation is very popular for romantic breaks and have led to marriage proposals and elopements in line with the marketing strategy for celebrations on Scilly.

The proposal has limited environmental impact and is pretty much 'off grid' requiring only a water feed for a low flush toilet and low spray shower and no connection to the foul drainage system. It will be powered by LPG gas and a small solar array. We will provide waste separation. The oak materials will weather into the wooded landscape. It is also mobile and requires no permanent standing – it would be easy to restore the landscape if the business ended.

The **Blue Sail Report 2011** also states:

'[That there is a] Lack of providers with obvious 'green' credentials'

And that the islands should look at

'Exploring the potential for... supportive planning policies for accommodation improvements'

Furthermore it states:

'Quality and distinctiveness are so important– not just at the luxury end, but at every level, including budget'.

In the responses to the consultation on the new local plan 33% agreed that there should be new forms of development versus 17% who said no (50% did not answer)

In the verbatim quotes the following are particularly relevant:

'I think there is a demand and space for tourism letting opportunities in the form of the increasingly popular shepherd's huts, yurts and pods which are far more attractive than the traditionally static caravan and easily concealed. It offers a non-permanent form of development within the financial reach of the less wealthy and attracts a new kind of young traveller type which is increasingly common now.

'Strengthen existing economy by permitting new tourism accommodation and facilities to broaden the market. The emphasis should be on quality in all categories and flexibility in order to promote a more even spread of passengers through the airport'

Island Partnership stated:

*'The range and quality of Scilly's visitor offer (including accommodation) has undoubtedly improved in recent years and during the life of the last Local Plan. However, it is vital that the islands keep moving forward, providing the infrastructure and conditions for economic growth in new and emerging sectors as well as for our tourism industry and our aspiration to deliver a world class visitor experience. The Local Plan should therefore provide the conditions to support improvements to the existing offer as well as new development providing that it is of an appropriate type and quality to meet or exceed the expectations of today's (and tomorrow's) visitor. With specific regard to the visitor economy, it is important that the new Local Plan facilitates development and continued enhancement of the tourism offer, in particular new, high quality and distinctive visitor experiences together with new or improved holiday accommodation. The Islands' Partnership would encourage a robust study be undertaken into the future accommodation supply (both type, style and quantity) on Scilly in order that the long term growth ambitions for the visitor economy can be achieved. This would also help to identify where there is a need for the replacement or perhaps change of use of poorer quality or end-of-life accommodation. **Equally, it would help to identify future investment priorities including the scope for new hotel development on St. Mary's or additional niche accommodation types that respond to changing market demands (e.g. eco-friendly, alternative, serviced apartments/units etc.)** However the "taste" and requirements of tourists will change, in that they will expect good value for money, particularly with accommodation and food; an improvement in this area is seen as a must.'*

The **Island Futures Report** also states that a key objective is to improve the quality of the tourism offer:

VISION: *A thriving, vibrant community rooted in nature, ready for change and excited about the future.*

AIM: *To grow the economy in order to protect the future viability of Scilly and its communities.*

OBJECTIVES:

- *To secure resilient, year-round transport services to Cornwall and further afield*
- **To improve the quality of the tourism offer**
- *To promote the Isles of Scilly more effectively*
- *To diversify the economy*
- *To create more collaborative opportunities for the islands' businesses*
- *To make the islands more self-sufficient and more resilient to future changes .*