



Purpose: For Decision

Planning Committee Report

Report of	STRATEGIC MANAGER FOR PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY
Date	13 JUNE 2023
Application Reference	22/01931/FUL
Application type	Full Planning Permission
Application Description	32 tourism pods & associated landscaping
Site address	Tapnell Farm, Newport Road, Freshwater, Isle of Wight PO410YJ
Parish	Yarmouth
Ward Councillor	Cllr Peter Spink
Applicant	Messrs Thomas, Andrew & Tom Turney & Honeyman Brown
Planning Officer	Lizzy Hardy

Reason for Planning Committee consideration	The Chairman of the Planning Committee has agreed a call in request by the local member, given that the application is considered to raise marginal and difficult policy issues due to the elevated nature of the site, the landscape impact of the development and the design of the tourism units.
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Recommendation	Conditional permission subject to the completion of a Legal Agreement securing a Land Management Plan for nitrate neutrality.
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Main considerations

- Principle of development
- Impact on the character of the area
- Highway considerations
- Ecology and Trees
- Impact upon the Solent Special Protection Area Habitat Sites
- Impact on neighbouring properties/uses

1 Recommendation

1.1 Conditional permission subject to planning conditions covering the following matters:

- Compliance with submitted plans
- Materials to be used
- Landscaping works
- External lighting
- Foul drainage connection
- Holiday occupancy only

The permission would also be subject to a planning obligation securing a Land Management Plan for the application site to secure the following mitigation to ensure the development is nitrate neutral:

- No agricultural use permitted within the red lined application site
- No grazing of animals on the area of 'greenspace'
- No fertilisers to be applied to the land
- No amenity grass mixes to be sown on the land
- Provision of dog waste bins and agreement of scheme for regular clearance of waste

2 Location and Site Characteristics

- 2.1** Tapnell Farm consists of a complex of farm buildings located to the north of the Newport Road in a rural setting on a plateau approximately 3km to the east of Freshwater and 2km to the south of Thorley. The farm buildings and surrounding land at Tapnell Farm have been converted/developed to create a farm tourist attraction, including a farm park, café, restaurant, football golf course, aqua park and holiday accommodation.
- 2.2** There are open agricultural fields to the north, east and west of the farm park complex, with Tapnell Farmhouse and its associated outbuildings, many of which have been converted into residential properties to the west of the application site. Vehicular access to the Tapnell Farm Park complex is via an access track from Newport Road. The application site lies on the western side of this vehicular access track to the southern side of the farm park and currently contains a timber clad w.c/shower block within the north-east corner of the application site, an approved area for the siting of bell tents as part of the existing seasonal campsite use, and an area of parking hardstanding with the rest of the application site laid to grass.
- 2.3** Public Right of Way Y9 runs along the southern boundary of the application site before crossing the farm access track and continuing east towards Broad Lane.
- 2.4** The application site is not located within the AONB designation, however the downland to the south of Newport Road does lie within the AONB.

3 Details of Application

- 3.1** The application seeks full planning permission for the siting of 32 tourism pods consisting of sleeping accommodation only. Each unit is shown to be 7.3m in length, 2.5m in width and 2.6m in height and is proposed to be positioned on the ground on bearers, with no permanent fixings to the land. The proposal also includes associated landscaping over the field to the west and south of the pods to include;
- 1,900m² of tree/scrub planting
 - 70 native trees
 - 195m of mixed native hedge
 - 21,300m² meadow grassland

- 3.2** The pods are proposed to be generally grouped together and arranged in single, twin or triple formations. The pods are proposed to be clad with rough sawn vertical timber and stained in earth tone colours, with the south and west elevations of the pods to include trellised living walls. The doors to the pods are positioned to the north-east/ eastern elevations and windows are positioned to the west/southwest elevations concealed with louvres.
- 3.3** No wired lighting is proposed to be provided within the Pods, with torches and battery-operated lanterns / light fittings being the only light source within the pods. Low-level bollards with recessed directional light fittings are proposed at 10m spacings on the paths alongside the Pods, which would be controlled to switch off all lights after 10pm following which point the lights would only be activated by sensors.
- 3.4** The current proposal is for the pods to be mainly used by groups associated with 'Camp Libertas' which partnered with Tapnell Farm in 2022 to offer children from 8 – 15 years old activity holidays. Whilst the Camp Libertas use of the pods is likely to be orientated mainly around the summer season, the pods are proposed to be available for rental all year round.
- 3.5** The plans show that the site would be accessed via the existing and previously consented access track, that leads from the B3399 Newport Road. This would lead into a small parking turning area, west of the main access to Tapnell Farm Park.

4 Relevant History

- 4.1** The overall Tapnell Farm site has an extensive planning history, however the following applications relate specifically to the land within the red lined application site.
- 4.2** P/00268/17 - Proposed part material change of use to the land as a seasonal campsite running from 1st May to 30th September per calendar year; proposed toilet and shower block with ancillary infrastructure and landscaping – Granted 30/05/2017
- 4.3** P/00253/15 - Proposed change of use to provide an activity centre including high ropes & zorbing course; single storey building to provide reception, store and office – Granted 05/05/2015
- 4.4** 19/01038/FUL - Retention of 5 glamping domes; proposed 2 glamping domes; proposed en-suites for each dome – Refused 08/11/2019

5 Development Plan Policy

National Planning Policy

- 5.1** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-

date, granting permission unless:

- i. The application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

The following sections of the NPPF are considered to be directly relevant to this planning application:

Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development

Section 6 - Building a strong, competitive economy

Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Local Planning Policy

- 5.2** The Island Plan Core Strategy identifies the application site as being located within the Wider Rural Area. The following policies are considered to be relevant to this application:

- SP1 Spatial Strategy
- SP3 Economy
- SP4 Tourism
- SP5 Environment
- SP7 Travel
- DM2 Design Quality for New Development
- DM8 Economic Development
- DM11 Historic and Built Environment
- DM12 Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- DM17 Sustainable Travel

Neighbourhood Planning Policy

- 5.3** There is no adopted neighbourhood plan in place covering the application site.

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and other planning guidance

- 5.4** In arriving at the recommendation in this report officers have given due regard to the following documents:

- Guidelines for Parking Provision as Part of New Developments Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
- Guidelines for Recycling and Refuse Storage in New Developments Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
- Isle of Wight Council Position Statement: Nitrogen neutral housing development (January 2023)
- Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy (December 2017)

- Isle of Wight AONB Management Plan 2019-2024

6. Consultee and Third Party Comments

Internal Consultees

- 6.1** The Ecology Officer has advised that an ecological appraisal is not required for the application due to the location and scale of development and raises no objection to the proposed landscaping scheme.
- 6.2** The Tree Officer has advised no trees of high amenity would be impacted upon by the proposed development.
- 6.3** Island Roads, commenting on behalf of the Local Highway Authority, has recommended approval.

External Consultees

- 6.4** The AONB Partnership has advised that they have no objection to the proposal subject to the proposed landscaping, materials and external lighting being strictly conditioned and implemented.
- 6.5** Natural England has confirmed that it concurs that the proposal would not have adverse effects on Solent Habitats (SAC/SPA) Sites subject to mitigation measures secured by a planning obligation.

Parish/Town Council Comments

- 6.6** Yarmouth Town Council object to the development for the following reasons:
- The proposed containers do not represent quality accommodation, which is not in keeping with the IWC tourism policy.
 - The proposed planting scheme does not include sufficient native species.
 - The application represents over-development and urbanisation of the site in an AONB.
 - The units will be in situ throughout the year, whereas the existing tents are only erected during the tourist season.

Third Party Representations

- 6.7** Two representations have been received, objecting, and raising the following summarised comments/concerns:
- Impact to dark skies of the AONB.
 - Adverse impact to residents from light spillage.
 - Proposal would significantly increase the impacts to the landscape compared to the existing campsite use due to the bulk and mass of the proposed units and because the site can be seen from many vantage points from the AONB.
 - The campsite use only occurs (bell tents in situ) between May and September, whereas the pods would be on site all year round.
 - Submission hasn't justified why the pods have to be in this location and

couldn't be elsewhere within the complex.

- Because one of the key vantage points overlooking the site is from higher land, the proposed planting would not mitigate the visual impact.
- The approved campsite scheme is not of significant enough weight to allow this application, as the harm to the AONB is greater.
- Insufficient level of information has been provided to evidence that the proposal would not impact upon the SPA.
- Proposal fails to be in accordance with Policies SP5, DM2, DM12 and DM15.

6.8 A total of 4 representations have been received, supporting the application for reasons that can be summarised as follows:

- Proposal would bring a much-needed boost in the schools and groups visits accommodation sector in a location that would deliver long and lasting memories for visitors.
- Proposal would help promote tourism on the Isle of Wight.
- The pods would significantly improve the quality of accommodation on offer to Camp Libertas students and enable the company to attract a much greater number of schools including ones located abroad.
- As Tapnell looks to expand their accommodation provision out-of-season, the 'pods' would provide a year-round solution for tourists who would prefer an alternative to tented accommodation.
- During 2022 Camp Libertas worked with over 20 IOW businesses to enable/enhance the 'Camp' experience at Tapnell which provided economic gain/promotion of those Island businesses.
- The landscaped 'pod' development would be more visually attractive than the white tents currently used on the campsite.
- Tapnell and Camp Libertas are very much aligned in their desire to support both the local, and wider, environment through introducing children to nature and outdoor activities at a young age and these proposals would enable Camp Libertas to welcome more guests to the Isle of Wight and reach a future generation of tourists.

6.9 Wightlink support the application on the following grounds:

- Proposal provides high quality accommodation for school groups to enjoy and connect with the rural environment.
- Tourism is a vital part of the Island economy and available bed-stock currently struggles to meet the demand.
- The nature of the development offering accommodation that can be used during the shoulder season benefits the Island economy.
- The timber cladding and living wall proposals demonstrate that the design has been carefully considered to blend well with the local environment.
- The height of the pods is lower than the 20 of the existing bell tents.

6.10 Southern Vectis support the principle of development and aims of the application to improve the tourist offer on the Island. They consider that it would add to the approach of sustainable tourism, and they will work with the applicant to ensure sustainable transport to this location.

- 6.11** The Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce supports the application on grounds which can be summarised as follows:
- Supports the provision of high quality accommodation for children which is designed for schools and education and adds an important learning opportunity for children to interact with farming rural life.
 - The pods are designed to blend into the natural landscape and are being placed in an area which has historically been used for temporary accommodation, so it is not additional, rather a different type of accommodation.
 - The proposal also helps promote jobs in the rural West Wight of the Island.
- 6.12** Wood Learn Forest School and Wild Therapy IOW are a local business and have written in support of the application as it economically benefits local businesses such as theirs when they are asked to provide activities for the schools attending the Camp Libertas site.

7 **Evaluation**

Principle of development

- 7.1** The Island Plan Core Strategy identifies the application site as being situated in the Wider Rural Area, where Policy SP1 of the Island Plan Core Strategy states that proposals for tourism related development will be supported in accordance with Policy SP4 (Tourism). Policy SP4 states that the Council will support sustainable growth in high quality tourism and proposals that increase the quality of existing tourism destinations and accommodation across the Island provided proposals utilize the unique characteristics of the historic and natural environment without compromising their integrity.
- 7.2** Policies SP3 (Economy) and SP4 (Tourism) seek to ensure that development proposals which can contribute to the Island's economy are supported and acknowledge that tourism can benefit the rural economy. SP4 also encourages proposals which will contribute to a diverse and high-quality tourism offer which will promote the Island as an all-year-round tourism destination and develop green and new niche tourism products.
- 7.3** The proposed tourism pods would form part of the tourism offer at Tapnell Farm, which is an existing, well established and high-quality tourism destination including farm park, restaurant, aqua park, target shooting range and a range of tourism accommodation types including holiday cottages, eco lodges, domes and safari tents.
- 7.4** The north-east corner of the application site already benefits from planning permission as a campsite between the 1st May to 30th September each calendar year approved under planning approval P/00268/17 for 30 bell tents, a communal activities tent and an ablution block. This campsite use has been implemented and the ablution block was constructed and brought into use to facilitate the campsite. This existing ablution block is proposed to be used in conjunction with the proposed development to provide w.c./ shower facilities for those staying in the tourism pods. The north-west corner of the application site benefits from planning permission as an activity centre including high ropes & zorbing course

under planning permission P/00253/15 which is also an implemented planning consent.

- 7.5** The applicant has confirmed that the site employs over 100 staff and that this rises above 150 in the summer with seasonal staff. In addition, the site uses many contractors and suppliers whose existence would not be viable without the farm. The applicant has also stated that the project also links in with other attractions because visitors to the site will undertake day trips to attractions and other educational providers. The applicant has confirmed that the proposals would result in an additional 10 jobs.
- 7.6** The proposed tourism pods would be located in the same area as the existing campsite use and therefore the principle of the use of this element of the site for tourism purposes is already established. Furthermore the proposal to upgrade the campsite accommodation to a type that would extend the season within which the accommodation could be used would align with the overarching objectives of Policy SP4 (Tourism) – to make the Island an all year round tourism destination, through developing green and new niche tourism products and therefore would be supported, in broad principle, in line with the aims of Policies SP1 (Spatial Strategy), SP3 (Economy) and SP4 (Tourism) of the Island Plan Core Strategy, subject to other relevant material planning considerations being satisfied which shall be discussed below. Officers consider that the benefits of the tourism accommodation would weight moderately in favour of the planning application.

Impact on the character of the area

- 7.7** The siting and design of any proposed development needs to conserve and enhance the character and context of the surrounding area, which in this instance also needs to take into regard the landscape character of the nearby AONB and Tennyson Heritage Coast.
- 7.8** The National Planning Policy Framework gives AONB's the highest level of protection when it comes to landscape and scenic beauty and aims to protect these areas. The Island Plan also protects the environment and landscape using Policies SP5 (Environment), DM2 (Design Quality for New Development), which outlines that development should be of high-quality design and should complement the character of the surrounding area, whilst having appropriate regard to existing constraints, and Policy DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) which states development will only be supported where it reflects the objectives of the Wight AONB.
- 7.9** A Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) has been submitted with the application which has assessed the visual impact of the proposed development from 15 public viewpoints (visual receptors) within the surrounding landscape. The conclusions of the LVIA are as follows:
- That the landscape and visual effects of the development are judged to have been mitigated through the introduction of an extensive range of measures which have been applied to the Pods themselves, including their orientation, siting, window and door openings, material choice and colour, through the use of brown roofs and through the use of landscaping (new woodland planting, specimen tree planting, new native hedge, new meadow grassland, and climbers positioned on the more sensitive western and southern face of the

Pods).

- None of the identified landscape or visual receptors is expected to receive a significant effect as a result of the proposed changes at any stage of the assessment period (construction, completion or after 15 years). Long term effects on the nearby Isle of Wight AONB landscape character areas are concluded to be negligible/ no effect after 15 years, with the woodland planting being viewed as a benefit to the wider landscape in the long term, whilst also providing screening to other parts of the existing Tapnell Farm site.
- The site does not contain any demonstrable physical attributes that would allow it to be defined as a 'valued landscape' as per paragraph 174 of the NPPF. The proposals include a range of landscape improvements, replacing the mown grass field with meadow grassland and tree planting, a new hedgerow and areas of woodland. Together these measures are considered to result in a moderate benefit to the landscape resource after a 15-year establishment period.
- The site is located on the edge of a gently sloping plateau which restricts potential visibility to lower-lying areas to the west and over rising ground and the elevated Downs to the southwest, south and southeast. As a result of these topographical changes, the site is therefore not visible from the north or east.
- The visual receptors most likely to be affected by the proposed changes are those in close proximity to the site from locations within the Farm Park and from the adjoining public right of way. Here, after a 15-year establishment period, the effects are considered to be slight adverse due to the proximity of the view to the 32no. Pods. However, their visibility will be largely concealed by the proposed landscaping and experienced in the context of the existing Farm Park uses.
- From more distant locations (lower ground to the west and elevated Downs to the southwest, south and southeast), the effects of the proposed changes on visual receptors here are considered to be negligible / no effect after a 15-year establishment period. This is considered appropriate given that the imperceptible Pods are unlikely to be visible or would be barely discernible amongst the established tree planting and other landscaping.
- The proposed Barnfield Solar Farm, located 1.2km to the northeast of the Site is not considered to have a cumulative effect on the landscape character or visual amenity of the Proposed Development.

In summary the LVIA concludes that the development approach is sensitive to the local landscape character and visual amenity through the incorporation of a range of mitigation and enhancement measures. Any effects on the landscape or visual resource are localised, and in some instances beneficial. Officers would agree with these conclusions.

- 7.10** The tourism pods would be situated on the same area of ground as a previously approved campsite which allows the erection of 30 bell tents and communal activities tent within the site between the months of May and September. Whilst the use of the approved campsite is limited to being seasonal, the w.c. block is a permanent building present on site all year round. Officers have also taken into

account the fact that planning permission P/00253/15, which has been implemented through the construction of the reception/office/store building and use of the land for zorbing, means the high ropes course (not presently constructed), which also formed part of that permission could also be constructed should the applicant wish to build out the remaining element of the approved activity centre.

7.11 The proposed tourism pods would be rectangular structures 7.3m in length, 2.5m in width and 2.6m in height. No permanent fixings to the land are proposed with the pods positioned at ground level on bearings to follow the natural topography of the field. The submitted plans show that the 32 pods would be generally grouped together arranged in single, twin or triple formations. The walls of the pods are proposed to be clad in timber and stained in earth tone colours, with the south and west elevations of the pods to include trellised living walls to act in composite with the wider detailed landscaping proposals. The proposals detail that the roof of the pods would be finished to allow natural seed colonisation. Therefore, the pods would be relatively low-level in nature, with the proposed muted materials and planted roofs softening their landscape impact.

7.12 The proposal includes associated landscaping over the field to the west and south of the pods to include:

- 1,900m² of tree/scrub planting
- 70no. native trees
- 195m mixed native hedge
- 21,300m² meadow grassland

A new mixed native hedge is proposed to be planted alongside the existing public right of way, which borders the southern boundary of the application site. Native woodland tree and shrub planting is proposed along the western boundary of the application site. Native specimen trees are also proposed to be planted amongst the proposed tourism pods and across the field to the west and south of the tourism pods, to follow the natural contours of the site. Mown grass paths are proposed to provide access between the pods and no new areas of hardstanding beyond the existing parking area are proposed. The remainder of the application site is proposed to be maintained as meadow grassland, planted with a seed mix to attract pollinating insects.

7.13 The proposed planting and landscaping scheme would enhance the appearance of the application site and provide natural screening to the proposed tourism pods and other parts of the Tapnell Farm Park from locations to the west. While the site is elevated and can be seen from visual receptors to the west, officers note that the site benefits from an existing consent for tourism accommodation. The proposed pods would be low-lying in nature and it is considered that the proposed landscaping scheme once established, would screen the appearance of the pods and give the site an improved appearance.

7.14 The tourism pods would consist of sleeping accommodation only in the form of a one roomed unit accommodating 4 beds. No wired lighting is proposed to be provided within the pods, with torches and battery-operated lanterns/light fittings being the only light source available within the pods. Externally low-level bollards with recessed directional light fittings are proposed at 10m spacings on the paths

alongside the pods to be controlled on timer switches which would turn all lights off after 10pm, following which point the lights would only be activated by sensors. It is considered therefore, that the impact of lighting associated with the scheme would be limited, and further mitigated by the proposed landscaping scheme.

- 7.15** The doors to the pods would be positioned to the north-east/ eastern elevations and windows are positioned to the west/southwest elevations concealed with louvres. This positioning of the windows and doors, the inclusion of louvres, the fact that the units would not have any wired lighting and the sensitive external lighting scheme, combined with the landscaping scheme would all limit the amount of the light pollution produced from the use of the tourism pods, especially in views from the more sensitive AONB.
- 7.16** The AONB designation begins on the southern side of the B3399, and so approximately 360m south of the application site. However, the site is overlooked from the AONB downland to the south, and therefore the AONB Partnership have made comment on the application, concluding that the low-level units, muted materials palette together with landscaping and lighting attenuation measures, would ensure no undue visual impacts would occur upon the AONB or its setting. The wider Tapnell Farm Park provides a visual backdrop to the proposed development with the proposed pods situated on the sloping hillside. Provided the landscaping and materials are strictly conditioned and implemented and the external lighting details as shown in the application are secured, the AONB Partnership have confirmed that they raise no objection to the application. The AONB Partnership's assessment of the proposal therefore concurs with the conclusions of the LVIA.
- 7.17** There are a number of listed buildings within the cluster of residential dwellings around Tapnell Farm House at Tapnell, which lies to the north-west of the application site however these buildings are situated at a minimum of 250m from the application site, with trees, and hedging lying between the application site and these listed buildings. Given the extent of the separation and screening from the listed buildings officers are satisfied that the proposal would not result in any adverse impact on the setting of these listed buildings.
- 7.18** In consideration of the above discussed matters, officers consider that, having regard to the extant consent and provided the enhanced landscaping scheme is secured, the proposals would not be overly prominent or result in a significant visual impact on the surrounding rural landscape, the wider AONB or on the setting of the nearby listed buildings. As such it is concluded that the proposed development would result in a moderate level of change that would not harm the landscape and therefore be in accordance with the aims of Policies SP5, DM2, DM11 and DM12 of the Core Strategy and Government advice contained within the NPPF.

Highway considerations

- 7.19** The proposed tourism units would be accessed via the existing vehicular access that serves the main Tapnell Farm Park site off Newport Road (B3399). This vehicular access also served the two extant planning permissions for the campsite and high ropes and zorbing activity centre.

- 7.20** Island Roads have confirmed that the visibility sight lines at the junction of the vehicular access road to Tapnell Farm Park with Newport Road are compliant, being in excess of the required 215m to both the east and west and that the vehicular access also benefits from a passing lane approved and implemented under a former planning approval for the site.
- 7.21** Island Roads have noted that whilst the existing campsite use is limited to between May and September, this seasonal use covers the main tourism period and therefore the envisaged busiest time period in terms of traffic generation. The fact that the proposed tourism pods are mainly orientated towards the 'Camp Libertas' partnership, providing holidays for children has also been noted by Island Roads as the likely mode of transport for the children to the site would be by minibus/coach rather than individually. The application details state that the pods would also form part of a general tourism offer outside of the main summer season to other tourists, so this use of the accommodation also has to be taken into consideration in terms of parking provision.
- 7.22** The site falls within Zone 2 as defined within the Guidelines for Parking Provision as Part of New Developments SPD. In accordance with the guidance set out within Table 5, a development of this nature should typically provide thirty-two vehicle parking spaces. There is an existing car park area within the campsite which is proposed to be retained for use in association with the proposed tourism pods. Island Roads are satisfied that this parking area would be satisfactory, as if any additional parking should be needed there is ample room within the wider Tapnell Farm site to accommodate this without resulting in any overspill parking affecting the public highway.
- 7.23** Following the above evaluation of the proposal Island Roads have raised no objection to the development and are satisfied that no highway conditions are required. Therefore, the development is considered to comply with policies SP7, DM2 and DM17 of the Island Plan, with this issue neither weighing for or against the application.

Ecology and Trees

- 7.24** The application site does not lie within any protected areas for wildlife. The closest designation, Tapnell Furze SINC and ancient woodland, lies approximately 400m away to the north-west of the application site. The Council's Ecology Officer has been consulted on the application and has advised that in their opinion, an ecological appraisal is not required in this instance due to the location and scale of development. The officer has also confirmed that they have no objections to the proposed landscaping which would include native species. The proposed landscaping scheme would also provide environmental benefits through the creation of additional and improved wildlife habitat.
- 7.25** The western boundary of the application site is marked by hedgerow and within the existing campsite area there is a scattering of low shrubbery planting. The Council's Tree Officer has not raised any objection to the proposed development being satisfied that no trees of high amenity would be impacted upon by the proposed development.

Impact upon the Solent Special Protection Area Habitat Sites

- 7.26** The application site is located within the identified Solent Special Protection Area buffer zone and therefore the impact of the development on the Solent Special Protection Area in line with the requirements set out in the Bird Aware Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy have to be taken into consideration. In this instance however it has been identified that the proposed tourism pods would result in a reduction in occupancy capacity in comparison to the existing campsite use and therefore there is no trigger for Likely Significant Effect on the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and therefore a contribution to the Bird Aware Solent scheme is not required in this instance.
- 7.27** Recent advice from Natural England is that the Southampton and Solent Waters Special Protection Area (SPA) is currently in an unfavourable condition as a result of excessive levels of nitrogen and phosphate, which has led to a detrimental impact on the habitats and species of birds to which the designation relates. In light of this and as a result of a European Court of Justice ruling known as the 'Dutch Case', developments therefore need to demonstrate that they would not add to the current unfavourable state of the SPA.
- 7.28** The Isle of Wight Council's approach for ensuring development related to housing or overnight accommodation is nitrate neutral is set out in the Isle of Wight Council Position Statement; Nitrogen Neutral Housing Development. The Position Statement has been drafted in consultation with Natural England, who have ratified the document. NE have advised the IWC that the nutrient neutrality approach applies to developments where treated effluent discharges into any Solent International Sites (or any water body (surface or groundwater) that subsequently discharges into such a site.
- 7.29** There is an existing w.c block on the application site which was constructed and used in conjunction with the existing campsite use. It is proposed that the tourism pods would use this existing w.c facility, the wastewater from which discharges to an existing package treatment plant (PTP) within the wider Tapnell Farm site and would remain to be so. The local watercourses to which the treated effluent from the PTP discharge into the Solent International Sites and therefore the proposal needs to evidence how nutrient neutrality would be achieved for the development.
- 7.30** In order to address the matter of nutrient neutrality, two nutrient budgets have been submitted which follow the methodologies set out in Natural England's guidance document. The first nitrate budget has used data to establish the nitrate load from the existing, approved and implemented planning for the campsite use that the site already benefits from under the approved planning permission P/00268/17 which allows for a total of 30 bell tents on the site which can accommodate a total of 160 guests at full capacity. The second nitrate budget has used data to establish the nitrate load from the proposed 32 tourism pods, which can accommodate 128 guests at full capacity. The nitrates budgets establish that the proposed tourism pods would result in a reduced occupancy capacity compared to the existing campsite use and hence a reduced nitrate output.
- 7.31** Whilst the proposed tourism pods have a lower occupancy capacity than the former campsite use, because the red lined application site includes a wider area of land, beyond the original area of the existing approved campsite, upon which enhanced landscaping is proposed as part of the development, Natural England

raised that it would need to be ensured that the future use of this 'greenspace' would not result in any increased nitrate load compared to the current existing use as lowland grazing. It is therefore proposed to make any planning permission subject to a land management plan to secure the following mitigation;

- No agricultural use permitted within the red lined application site
- No grazing of animals on the area of 'greenspace'
- No fertilisers to be applied to the land to create amenity grassland
- No amenity grass mixes to be sown on the land
- Provision of dog waste bins and agreement of scheme for regular clearance of waste

The land management plan would be sought to be secured through an appropriate legal agreement, which would secure a timetable for the provision of the landscape enhancement planting and provision of the dog waste bins and a future maintenance and management plan for the area of 'greenspace'.

7.32 The Council's Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) concludes that subject to securing such a Land Management Plan that the proposed development would not have any adverse implications for Solent Habitats (SPA/SAC) sites. Natural England has confirmed that it agrees with the conclusions of the Council's HRA and raises no objection to the development.

7.33 Having regard to the above, subject to completion of a planning obligation to secure the Land Management Plan, it is concluded that the development would have no adverse impacts on the Solent SPA and therefore would be in accordance with the aims of policy DM2 and DM12 of the Island Plan Core Strategy, the NPPF and the requirements of the Habitats Regulations. It is considered that this development would result in moderate benefits to the environment, through reducing nitrogen inputs as a result of the Land Management Plan, while also providing landscaping that would benefit wildlife.

Impact on neighbouring properties/uses

7.34 The nearest neighbouring properties to the proposed tourism pods are located approximately 130m to the north-west of the application site within the group of dwellings at Tapnell. One third party has raised that their home in Shalfleet is already adversely impacted upon by light spillage from Tapnell Farm and object to the application on the grounds that this proposal will worsen this impact.

7.35 The main potential impacts to neighbouring amenity would be from noise and light pollution generated by visitor's voices, activities undertaken on the site, vehicle movements and lighting at the site. Given the existing campsite use the site already benefits from any such impacts would however be no greater than already exists, in fact as the proposal has a lower occupation capacity than the existing campsite use any noise impacts should be reduced.

7.36 In respect of the concerns over the lighting proposed at the development impacting upon neighbouring amenity as discussed above the pods would not be connected to mains electric and therefore only battery operated lanterns and light fittings would be used inside the pods and externally to the pods low level bollards with recessed directional light fittings are proposed to be controlled on timer switches which would turn all lights off after 10pm, following which point the lights

would only be activated by sensors. In view of the type of lighting being used within and outside the pods and the timer controls proposed it is satisfied that the proposal would not result in a level of light spillage that would adversely impact upon neighbouring amenity.

- 7.37** Due to the distance to the nearest neighbouring properties and the intervening trees and vegetation officers are satisfied that the proposal would have an acceptable relationship with the nearest neighbouring properties in accordance with Policy DM2 of the Core Strategy. It is considered that this matter neither weighs for or against this proposal.

8. Planning balance and conclusions

- 8.1** The National Planning Policy Framework states that the planning system is planned and that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development. In the same way, planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The role of the planning system is to balance issues, particularly where they compete and compare the benefits of a proposed development with any identified harm. In this context, the NPPF advises that the planning system has three overarching objectives, these being economic, social and environmental objectives. These issues are balanced below:

Economic

- 8.2** The NPPF states that the economic objective is to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth. The application would result in the upgrading of existing tourism accommodation and therefore has the potential to boost the tourism offer on the Isle of Wight, which has economic benefits associated with job creation and the associated benefits to other local businesses who supply services, produce etc to the tourism site at Tapnell Farm. Officers consider that the development would provide economic benefits that would weigh moderately in favour of the scheme.

Social

- 8.3** The NPPF states that the social objective is to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, referring to supporting the community's health, social and cultural well-being. The proposal is for the tourism pods to be mainly used by groups associated with 'Camp Libertas' which partnered with Tapnell Farm in 2022 to offer children from 8 – 15 years old activity holidays. 'Camp Libertas' activity holidays are aimed at providing children the opportunity to connect with nature, their peers and, ultimately, themselves in a uniquely inspiring, creative, fun and engaging programme at Tapnell Farm. The proposal would result in an additional 10 jobs, adding to those already in existence at the site. Officers therefore consider that the development would provide social benefits that would weigh moderately in favour of the scheme.

Environmental

- 8.4** The NPPF states that the environmental objective is to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
- 8.5** The proposed development would not compromise designated sites or impact upon protected species or habitats on site. Confirmation has been provided that the occupancy capacity of the tourism accommodation would be less than that which can be accommodated under the existing campsite use, this along with the proposal to secure a land management plan for the development ensures that the proposed development would not result in any greater impact from nitrate loadings upon the protected Solent SPAs/ Ramsar site compared to the existing campsite use. Due to the reduction in occupancy numbers, it has also been concluded that there is no trigger for Likely Significant Effect on the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and therefore a contribution to the Bird Aware Solent scheme is not required in this instance.
- 8.6** The wider Tapnell Farm Park provides a visual backdrop to the proposed development with the proposed pods situated on the sloping hillside. The low profile of the units, coupled with the muted materials palette together with landscaping and lighting attenuation measures, would ensure no undue visual impacts would occur upon the rural landscape or the setting of the wider AONB, particularly when having regard to the extant consent for the site. Provided the landscaping and materials scheme are strictly conditioned and implemented and the external lighting details as shown in the application are secured, the impact to the landscape character of the area would be managed to a moderate level and result in minor environmental benefits that would weight in favour of the proposals.

Conclusion

- 8.7** Officers consider that the development would result in social benefits, with beneficial environmental mitigation that would combine with the economic benefits brought forward through the boost the development would offer to the tourism industry on the Isle of Wight and the associated job creation and benefits to other local businesses.
- 8.9** As a result, having given due regard and appropriate weight to all material considerations, including the extant consent, the application is considered, on balance, to be acceptable, subject to appropriate mitigation, which can be secured by conditions and a Section 106 Agreement. The application is therefore considered on balance to be acceptable and to comply with the policies and guidance outlined within this report.

9 Statement of Proactive Working

9.1 ARTICLE 31 - WORKING WITH THE APPLICANT

In accordance with paragraph 38 of the NPPF, the Isle of Wight Council takes a positive approach to development proposals focused on solutions to secure

sustainable developments that improve the economic, social, and environmental conditions of the area. Where development proposals are considered to be sustainable, the Council aims to work proactively with applicants in the following ways:

- By offering a pre-application advice service; and
- Updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application and, where there is not a principle objection to the proposed development, suggest solutions where possible.

In this instance the application sought pre-application advice for the site and additional information has been submitted through the course of the application which has enabled the Council to fully assess the development in regard to the impact upon the Solent Special Protection Area Habitat Sites.

10 Conditions and reasons

- 1** The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2** The development hereby permitted shall be retained in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans numbered/titled:

o30_150_002A Site Plan
o30_150_003 Illustrative masterplan
o30_150_004 Cross Sections
o30_150_005 Lighting Proposals
o30_150_801 Soft Landscape Plan
Single Pod Plans and Elevations dated 17.10.22

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure the satisfactory implementation of the development in accordance with the aims of policy DM2 Design Quality for New Development of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

- 3** The material finish to the tourism pods hereby approved shall be in accordance with the following details:

Walls - clad in rough sawn vertical timber and stained in one of the colours depicted in the natural colour system outlined upon the drawing titled - Single Pod Plans and Elevations dated 17.10.22.

South and west elevations of the pods to include trellised living walls.

Roof – brown roof to allow natural seed colonisation.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the area and to comply with policy DM2 (Design Quality for New Development) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

- 4** The landscaping of the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the details on the Soft Landscaping Plan drawing number o30_150_801 and the Illustrative masterplan drawing number o30_150_003. All

planting, seeding or turfing as detailed on these plans shall be carried out in accordance with a timetable to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority within three months of the date of this decision. Works shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details and agreed timetable. Any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure the appearance of the development is satisfactory and to mitigate the landscape impact of the development, to comply with policy DM2 (Design Quality for New Development) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

- 5** The provision of any external lighting on the development site shall be carried out in accordance with the details outlined on the Lighting Proposal Plan drawing number o30_150_005.

Reason: To prevent light pollution from harming the character of the surrounding area and to protect neighbouring amenity and to comply with the requirements of policies DM2 (Design Quality for New Development) and DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

- 6** Foul drainage from the w.c. block serving the approved tourism accommodation shall be connected to the package treatment plant within the Tapnell Farm site and shall be retained as such thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that the waste water discharge associated with the approved tourism accommodation is suitably drained, to protect ground water and watercourses from pollution, to prevent harmful impacts on the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site and to comply with policies SP5 (Environment), DM2 (Design Quality for New Development), DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) and DM14 (Flood Risk) of the Island Plan Core Strategy.

- 7** The 32 units of accommodation hereby permitted shall only be used as holiday accommodation and shall not be used at any time as a main or permanent residence. The owner(s) or manager(s) of the accommodation shall maintain a comprehensive and up-to-date register listing the names of all occupants of the accommodation, their main home address, and recording the dates of occupation and vacation of the accommodation. This register shall be kept by the owner(s)/manager(s) for a rolling continuous period of 10 years and made available to the Local Planning Authority on request following reasonable notice.

Reason: To ensure that the accommodation is only used as holiday accommodation in the interests of the Island's tourism economy in accordance with the aims of Policies SP1 (Spatial Strategy) and SP4 (Tourism) of the Island Plan Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.