



Monmouthshire County Council
Local Development Plan

Draft Sustainable Tourism
Accommodation
Supplementary Planning
Guidance

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Planning Policy Service

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*Front Cover Photographs Clockwise from Top Left:
Yurt, Hidden Valley Yurts, Llanishen
Shepherd's Hut, Meend Farm, Penallt
Yurt, Penhein, Llanvair Discoed
Yurts, Hidden Valley Yurts, Llanishen*

1 Introduction: Purpose of this Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 1.1 Tourism plays a significant role in the Monmouthshire economy particularly in assisting the diversification of the rural economy and in sustaining the County's historic town centres. Monmouthshire benefits from extensive natural and cultural assets that offer considerable potential for residents and visitors to enjoy. The County is noted for its natural beauty and has a rich and diverse landscape stretching from the Gwent Levels in the south to the uplands of the Brecon Beacons in the north and the picturesque river corridor of the Wye Valley and Offa's Dyke in the east. Monmouthshire's historic market towns and cultural/heritage assets are also key attractions.
- 1.2 The visitor economy provides jobs, services and facilities that are essential to the well-being and enjoyment of local communities and residents of Monmouthshire. In 2015 there were 2.19 million visitors to the County, with tourist expenditure amounting to £187 million¹. Tourism also provides opportunities for enterprise and employment, and is a significant employer in the County. According to STEAM, tourism supported 2,744 full time equivalent jobs in 2015, accounting for approximately 10% of all employment in the County. Of note, the relative importance of staying visitors has increased in recent years, with such visitors accounting for 77% of the total amount generated by tourism in 2015 and staying an average of 2.5 nights.
- 1.3 Given the importance of tourism to the Monmouthshire economy, the need to safeguard, provide and enhance the County's visitor facilities, including the accommodation offer, is essential if Monmouthshire is to realise its potential as a high quality and competitive visitor destination.
- 1.4 Reflecting this and the aims of national planning policy, there is a desire to encourage and plan for sustainable forms of tourism accommodation in Monmouthshire. The LDP provides a positive planning framework to enable appropriate tourism development whilst ensuring that the County's natural and built environment, on which the tourism market depends, is protected/enhanced.
- 1.5 In recent years new forms of visitor accommodation known as 'glamping' (i.e. glamorous camping) have emerged and are becoming increasingly popular with the staying visitor market. Given that such forms of accommodation are a relatively recent innovation they are not defined in legislation and not explicitly referred to in current LDP policies. Accordingly, there is a need to clarify how such proposals should be assessed against the existing LDP policy framework.
- 1.6 This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is intended to provide certainty and clarity for applicants, officers and Members in the interpretation and implementation of the existing LDP policy framework in relation to proposals for sustainable visitor accommodation. For the purposes of this SPG sustainable visitor accommodation is concerned primarily with glamping facilities, although it would also apply to other forms of sustainable visitor accommodation. The guidance relates to proposals outside settlement boundaries (as identified on the LDP proposals maps). Within settlement

¹ STEAM 2015. (STEAM is a tourism economic impact modelling process which approaches the measurement of tourism from the bottom up through its use of local supply data and tourism performance and visitor survey data collection).

boundaries, such accommodation is generally acceptable in principle subject to normal amenity considerations and planning policy matters such as flood risk.

- 1.7 This SPG is aimed at anyone considering proposals for glamping accommodation in rural Monmouthshire and will assist all those involved in the formulation and determination of such proposals. The SPG is a material consideration in relation to planning applications and appeals and helps guide applicants and the Council through the planning process with regard to proposals for sustainable forms of tourism accommodation.

The SPG contains the following information:

- **Section 2** provides an overview of the national and local planning policy context in relation to sustainable tourism;
- **Section 3** explains what is meant by sustainable tourism accommodation in relation to Policy S11 and provides an overview of the various types of glamping accommodation to which this SPG relates;
- **Section 4** provides guidance on the interpretation and implementation of the LDP policy framework in relation to glamping accommodation.
- **Section 5** provides information on submitting a planning application for sustainable visitor accommodation, including details of the Council's pre-planning application advice service.

- **Appendices**

LDP Tourism Policy Framework (Appendix A)

Guidance for Assessing Specific Types of Glamping Accommodation: Key Policy Considerations (Appendix B)

Example Planning Conditions (Appendix C)

Sources of Advice (Appendix D)

2 Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy

- 2.1 National planning policy on tourism is set out in Chapter 11 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW, Edition 9 November 2017) and reflects the Welsh Government's aim to encourage tourism to grow in a sustainable way and make an increasing contribution to the economic, social and environmental well-being of Wales (11.1.2). It provides for the planning system to encourage sustainable tourism in ways which enable it to contribute to economic development, conservation, rural diversification, urban regeneration and social inclusion, recognising the needs of visitors and local communities (11.1.4).
- 2.2 PPW recognises the importance of tourism to economic prosperity and job creation and its ability to act as a catalyst for environmental protection, regeneration and improvement in both urban and rural areas. In rural areas tourism related development is considered to be an essential element in providing for a healthy, diverse local economy and in contributing to the provision and maintenance of facilities for local communities. However, it also clarifies that such development should be sympathetic in nature and scale to the local environment and to the needs of the visitors and the local community.
- 2.3 National guidance is clear that development plans should encourage the diversification of farm enterprises and other parts of the rural economy for appropriate tourism uses, subject to adequate safeguards for the character and appearance of the countryside, particularly its landscape, biodiversity and local amenity value (11.2.7).
- 2.4 These national aims and objectives are reflected in the LDP's tourism planning policy framework and this SPG.

Monmouthshire Local Development Plan (LDP)

- 2.5 The Monmouthshire LDP was adopted in February 2014 and provides the planning policy framework for this SPG. The vital role of tourism to the Monmouthshire economy is reflected in the LDP policy framework which seeks to support and enable sustainable forms of tourism development while at the same time ensuring that the natural and built environment, key drivers of the visitor economy, are preserved and enhanced.
- 2.6 Strategic Policy S11 – Visitor Economy – specifically seeks to enable the provision and enhancement of sustainable tourism development in Monmouthshire.

S11 Visitor Economy

Development proposals that provide and/or enhance sustainable forms of tourism will be permitted subject to detailed planning considerations.

Development proposals that would have an unacceptable adverse impact on features and areas of tourism interest and their settings, or that would result in the unjustified loss of tourism facilities will not be permitted.

The first part of Strategic Policy S11 gives positive encouragement to and enables the provision of sustainable forms of tourism, including visitor accommodation, subject to detailed planning considerations. The second part of the policy seeks to protect and prevent the loss of tourism facilities in the County. This SPG relates to the first part of the policy only.

2.7 Policy S11 is supported by a number of development management tourism policies which provide a more detailed policy framework to support the provision and enhancement of tourist facilities (these are set out in **Appendix A**):

- T1 Touring and Tented Camping Sites
- T2 Visitor Accommodation outside Settlements
- T3 Golf Courses

Strategic policies S8 (Enterprise and Economy) and S10 (Rural Enterprise) also offer support for sustainable economic growth and the provision of rural enterprise/rural diversification, where appropriate. Policy RE3 (Agricultural Diversification) is also supportive of many forms of sustainable visitor accommodation. Other LDP policies, including those relating to landscape and highways, will also be relevant to such proposals and the LDP should be referred to accordingly.

2.8 Further details on the relevance and interpretation of these policies in relation to glamping proposals is set out in Section 4 and **Appendix B** of this SPG.

2.9 Proposals for sustainable tourism accommodation should also have regard to the Council's Green Infrastructure SPG and emerging Landscape SPG.

3 Sustainable Tourism Accommodation

What is Sustainable Tourism Accommodation?

- 3.1 The LDP defines sustainable tourism as tourism that is 'economically viable, generates local benefits, is welcomed by and helps support local communities, reduces global environmental impacts and protects/enhances the local environment' (5.82).
- 3.2 Sustainable tourism is defined in the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism as 'Any form of development, management or tourist activity which ensures the long-term protection and preservation of natural, cultural and social resources and contributes in a positive and equitable manner to the economic development and well-being of individuals living, working or staying in protected areas.'
- 3.3 In view of this it is considered that sustainable tourism accommodation (glamping) proposals should reflect the following key principles of sustainable tourism:
- Generate benefits for the local economy (residents and visitors)
 - Protect and enhance landscape character and natural/historic environment i.e. visually unobtrusive
 - Scale and design appropriate to site context.
 - Locally adapted (recognising that sustainable accommodation solutions can be diverse/unique)
 - Generate minimal car trips
 - Make use of renewable energy resources (energy efficient)
 - Capable of being removed without leaving a permanent trace

All proposals for sustainable tourism accommodation will be expected to accord with these key principles.

Glamping Accommodation

- 3.4 Glamping accommodation has become increasingly popular in recent years and offers visitors a certain level of luxury and comfort above what can be offered in the traditional tenting experience. There are various types of glamping accommodation, the majority of which are semi-permanent structures and typically incorporate the aforementioned principles of sustainable tourism. Typical examples of glamping accommodation include:

Yurts

Large circular tent structures, comprising a latticed wooden frame with felt insulation and canvas cover. Yurts often have wood burners and beds. Typically larger, more complex to erect and more permanent than traditional tents given their wooden bases which generally remain in situ throughout the year. Upper parts of the structures can be easily removed.



Yurt, Hidden Valley Yurts, Llanishen

Tepees



Tepee, Cleddan Valley, Powys – copyright permission sought
(Image source: love-camping.co.uk)

Conical shaped tent comprising rounded wooden pole frame covered with canvas. Tepees often have wood burners and beds. Typically larger, more complex to erect and more permanent than traditional tents given their wooden bases which generally remain in situ throughout the year. Upper parts of the structures can be easily removed.

Bell Tents

Conical shaped tent supported by a single central pole and covered with canvas. Bell tents can have beds. Can be more permanent than traditional tents where they have wooden bases which may remain in situ throughout the year.



Bell Tent, Kingstone Brewery, Tintern
(Image Source: CanopyandStars.co.uk)
Copyright permission sought

Wooden Pods/ Tents



Wooden Pods, Monmouthshire

Typically simple timber structures comprising a floor, sides and roof with no services although it is recognised that some types of pods/tents incorporate beds/heaters and may be connected to services. Wooden pods/tents are generally transported onto a site as a complete unit and simply placed on land (no foundations). They cannot be categorised as touring units given their greater degree of permanency.

Shepherd's Huts

19th and 20th century version of a modern caravan. Shepherd's huts typically comprise a solid wooden frame on cast iron wheels with corrugated iron roof and sides. Often have beds, wood burners and other facilities. As with wooden pods, they are transported onto a site as a complete unit. They cannot be categorised as touring units given their greater degree of permanency.



Shepherd's Hut, Penallt

Tree Houses

Structures built next to and/or around tree trunk/branches above ground level. Some have beds/ facilities while others comprise a single open space /no facilities. Can vary considerably in type, design and scale (this would determine whether it would



constitute a sustainable form of tourist accommodation in the context of the LDP policy framework and this SPG). Unlike the aforementioned types of glamping accommodation, tree houses are permanent structures and are considered to be operational development as explained in paragraphs 4.9-4.10.

Tree House, Powys

(Image Source: CanopyandStars.co.uk) copyright permission sought

- 3.5 Glamping accommodation typically has infrastructure requirements in the form of amenity blocks as many do not contain facilities such as toilets, showers and kitchens. Guidance and key policy considerations in relation to the provision of amenity blocks to accompany glamping accommodation is set out in paragraph 4.18.
- 3.6 This list of glamping accommodation types is not exhaustive, and should proposals for other types of sustainable visitor accommodation come forward these will also be assessed in accordance with the LDP policy framework and the guidance contained in this SPG.

4 Interpretation and Implementation of the LDP Policy Framework for Assessing Proposals for Sustainable Tourism Accommodation

- 4.1 This section of the guidance provides detail on the interpretation and implementation of the LDP policy framework in assessing proposals for glamping accommodation. Further guidance in relation to specific types of glamping accommodation is set out at **Appendix B** and will assist in the formulation and assessment of such proposals. To reiterate, the guidance relates to glamping proposals outside settlement boundaries (as identified on the LDP proposals maps). Within settlement boundaries, such accommodation is generally acceptable in principle subject to normal amenity considerations and planning policy matters such as flood risk.
- 4.2 The Council seeks to support and adopt a positive approach to sustainable forms of visitor accommodation. This is reflected in the LDP policy framework which is supportive of such proposals providing that this is not at the expense of natural and built environment, which in themselves are key drivers of the County's visitor economy. Appropriate proposals will be those which are considered to accord with principles of sustainable tourism set out in paragraph 3.4, i.e. have minimal landscape/environmental impact, generate benefits for the local economy, of appropriate scale and design, generate minimal traffic, incorporate renewable energy solutions and are capable of being removed without leaving a permanent trace.

Glamping Accommodation Proposals: Key Planning Considerations

- 4.3 The main planning considerations that will be relevant to the majority of proposals/applications for sustainable forms of tourism accommodation are set out below. Other considerations may, however, be relevant on a site specific basis. These issues will need to be considered and balanced in the assessment of planning applications for such proposals.

Strategic Policy S11 – Visitor Economy

- 4.4 The starting point for assessing proposals for sustainable tourism accommodation is Strategic Policy S11 which seeks to enable the provision of sustainable forms of tourism development subject to detailed planning considerations. Of note, the limited degree of permanence of most forms of sustainable tourism accommodation² means they can be considered as a use of land rather than operational development.
- 4.5 Proposals for sustainable tourism accommodation will generally be supported by S11 unless ruled out by other LDP policies. To constitute a sustainable form of visitor accommodation in the context of Policy S11, proposals will need to demonstrate that they incorporate the key principles of sustainable tourism as set out in paragraph 3.4.
- 4.6 Strategic policies S8 (Enterprise and Economy) and S10 (Rural Enterprise) are also applicable and may provide support for such proposals, subject to detailed planning considerations.
- 4.7 Proposals for sustainable visitor accommodation would therefore be acceptable in principle unless ruled out by detailed development management tourism policies T1, T2 or other relevant LDP policies. To deal with these in turn:

² With the exception of tree houses, most forms of glamping accommodation are a use of land rather than operational development.

T1 – Touring and Tented Camping Sites

- 4.8 This policy would apply/offer support to specific types of glamping accommodation such as yurts, tepees and bell tents where they are considered to constitute a tented camping site i.e. the units are not permanent and upper parts of the units can be easily removed. However, the applicability of this policy diminishes where proposals involve supporting infrastructure, such as sizeable areas of raised decking. Where relevant, consideration must be given to the criteria set out in this policy.

T2 – Visitor Accommodation Outside Settlements

- 4.9 Part of this policy applies to new build permanent serviced/self-catering visitor accommodation proposals outside settlement limits and as such will not be relevant to many forms of glamping. However, where glamping proposals constitute permanent new build development, for example tree houses, this policy would be applicable.
- 4.10 The policy does not support new build permanent self-catering visitor accommodation outside settlement boundaries unless ancillary to established medium or large hotels. Proposals for new build permanent glamping accommodation (operational development) would therefore generally be contrary to this policy. However, it is recognised that there may be instances where such accommodation could constitute sustainable visitor accommodation (in accordance with sustainable tourism principles set out in 3.4). Therefore, where appropriate, such proposals could be balanced against other LDP policies, including Policy S11, to allow a new build permanent form of sustainable visitor accommodation in cases where a proposal is considered to constitute sustainable tourism accommodation given its scale, innovation, design etc. Such proposals would need to be considered on a case by case basis.
- 4.10 Policy T2 also allows for the re-use or conversion of existing buildings for tourism accommodation in the countryside subject to the criteria set out in Policy H4 (Conversion / Rehabilitation of Buildings in the Open Countryside for Residential Use). This matter will be given further consideration in a separate SPG dealing specifically with Policy H4. As an exception, Policy T2 also allows for visitor accommodation which involves the substantial rebuild of a building within the curtilage of an existing and occupied farm property where it assists in an agricultural diversification scheme in accordance with Policy RE3 (Agricultural Diversification). By definition, this provision would normally relate to a more traditional holiday cottage or small B&B rather than glamping.

T3 – Golf Courses

- 4.11 Policy T3 allows for visitor accommodation on golf courses where it supports the tourism economy, subject to detailed planning considerations, and should be referred to where relevant.

RE3 – Agricultural Diversification

- 4.12 Criterion d) of Policy RE3 offers support for certain types of glamping accommodation (i.e. so long as not new build structures) where proposals are linked to agricultural diversification schemes. The applicability of this policy to glamping proposals is given further consideration in Appendix B.

Other LDP Policies

- 4.13 Having considered the aforementioned key tourism related policies, consideration will need to be given to a proposal's compliance with other relevant LDP policies, including landscape, highways and natural/historic environment. Relevant policies are likely to include:
- LC1 New Built Development in the Open Countryside
 - LC5 Protection and Enhancement of Landscape Character.
Landscape impacts will be a key policy consideration in the formulation and assessment of glamping accommodation proposals in the open countryside.
 - G11 Green Infrastructure
 - NE1 Nature Conservation and Development
 - MV1 Proposed Developments and Highway Considerations
 - SD3 Flood Risk
 - DES1 General Design Considerations
 - EP1 Amenity and Environmental Protection
 - EP3 Lighting
- 4.14 This list is not exhaustive and policies may vary on a case by case basis depending on site context and the proposal. Applicants are advised to engage in the Council's pre-planning application advice service to determine which key LDP policies apply and to gain general planning advice (see section 5).

Scale of Development and Cumulative Impacts

- 4.15 The scale of a glamping accommodation proposal will be a key consideration in its assessment against the LDP policy framework. An increase in the scale of a proposal could result in potential non-compliance with other LDP policies, including for example Policy S11, in terms of whether it would constitute a sustainable form of visitor accommodation, and Policy LC5 in terms of impact on landscape character.
- 4.16 Similarly, the cumulative impacts of a glamping proposal will also be an important consideration in determining its appropriateness and compliance with the policy framework. As above, in instances where the cumulative impacts of a proposal are of concern there could be potential non-compliance with other LDP policies.

Degree of Permanency

- 4.17 A key planning consideration in assessing proposals for glamping accommodation is the degree of permanency of the unit(s) and whether it (they) will be removed from the site out of season. In general, glamping accommodation such as yurts, tepees, bell tents, shepherd's huts should be taken down or relocated out of season. However, the necessity for this will need to be considered on a case by case basis depending on site context and landscape/visual impacts.
- 4.18 In this context, regard should also be given to the importance of maintaining a balance between the need to protect the landscape/environment and to avoid negative effects on the local economy due to the seasonal nature of tourism. Again, this will need to be considered on a case by case basis.

Supporting Infrastructure

- 4.19 Amenity blocks (showers, toilets, kitchen/eating areas) are often required to accompany glamping accommodation, where such facilities are not incorporated within

the accommodation itself. In such instances, the first preference for these facilities would be for the conversion of existing buildings (subject to compliance with Policy H4). Where this is not possible, such facilities could be considered as ancillary to sustainable tourism accommodation, again subject to other relevant policy considerations, including landscape impact. Careful consideration should be given to the scale and design of amenity facilities to ensure landscape /environmental impacts are minimised.

- 4.20 As a sustainable form of visitor accommodation it is expected that glamping proposals will have minimal supporting infrastructure. Access roads/tracks, drainage facilities, electricity and water supplies should be kept to a minimum. Supplementary features such as fire pits, BBQ areas should be integrated within the overall scheme design. All such paraphernalia should be included in plans and documents submitted in order to ensure compliance with policy framework. The intention is that such accommodation should have minimal landscape/visual impacts. In accordance with sustainable tourism principles, proposals are encouraged to incorporate rainwater recycling and incorporate renewable energy for lighting and heating purposes e.g. solar panels. This is in marked contrast to static caravan parks, which are not considered to be a sustainable form of tourism or supported by this policy.

Occupancy Restrictions

- 4.21 In all cases, the use of such visitor accommodation for permanent residential occupancy will not be acceptable. Accommodation must remain for the intended tourism purpose only so that the wider economic benefits are secured. Further details on this matter, and seasonal occupancy, is provided in Appendix C Planning Conditions.

Planning Conditions

- 4.22 **Appendix C** sets out a list of example planning conditions that may apply to planning permissions for glamping accommodation. These include:
- The number and siting of units and type of accommodation permitted (to ensure the site remains informal/sustainable),
 - Occupancy (to ensure that the original use is retained and not used for unauthorised permanent residential accommodation)
 - Seasonal occupancy (although the importance of maintaining a balance between protecting the landscape/environment and avoiding negative local economic impacts which can be associated with the seasonal nature of tourism).

Guidance on Specific Types of Glamping Accommodation

- 4.23 Further detailed policy considerations in relation to specific types of sustainable visitor accommodation is provided in **Appendix B**.

5 Submitting a Planning Application

- 5.1 Anyone considering a proposal for sustainable visitor accommodation are, in the first instance, encouraged to engage with the LPA through the formal pre-planning application advice service (available at a modest cost). This will enable discussions with relevant officers at an early stage to determine the relevant planning issues (e.g. site constraints, design considerations), identify the key applicable LDP policies/ SPG and establish the information required to accompany an application. This will assist in preparing a proposal for submission and avoid any unnecessary delays.
- 5.2 In submitting an application, the Council expects applicants to submit a reasonable level of detail in order to allow a comprehensive consideration of the proposal. This will vary on a case by case basis depending on the nature /scale of the proposal but will often include a landscape assessment. The Council would also expect all applications to include full details of any proposed supporting infrastructure, including amenity facilities, decking, access roads/tracks etc. Engagement at the pre-application stage will assist in determining the level of information required.
- 5.3 Information on the Council's pre-planning application advice service is available using the following link:

<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/planning/pre-application-advice-service>

In 2015/16, of those planning applications that were first subject to pre-application advice, 100% were determined in accordance with the pre-application advice. 99% of the applications were approved. The remaining two applications were refused in accordance with the pre-application advice, and the Council's decision was subsequently upheld at appeal.