



DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GLAMPING SITE AT
EAST COURT FARM
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Proposed is the installation of 3no. glamping pods and 4no. 'Finman Retreat' timber cabins for overnight guest use, external decking area, 4no. barrel saunas with cold plunge, footpaths, permeable track, parking & turning area, secure bicycle storage and recycling/refuse storage. Also intended is minor landscaping of the site, planting of native species trees, shrubbery and meadow grass with wildflowers throughout the site.

All new units will be connected to 2no. new private package treatment plants and soakaways. All hard landscaping will be constructed from permeable materials and all new units will be surrounded by a gravel border to allow roof run-off to easily infiltrate the ground.

The chosen high-end glamping pods will be constructed off-site by manufacturer Pod Factory (Snowdon model) and timber cabins by Logspan (Finman Retreat 1 and 2 bedroom models). All pods will be delivered as a full unit ready for installation while the Finman Retreats will be delivered as a kit and assembled on site.

The application site is situated on the eastern outskirts of Gravesend. The site location will be easily accessible from across the country via both car and public transport. The proposal supports sustainable travel by including E.V. charging points, secure bicycle storage and bike lending.

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

In designing the proposed site, Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (GLPCS) (Adopted Sep 2014), National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and The Tourism & Heritage Strategy for Gravesham 2021-26 were referenced and appropriate policies considered.

We believe this proposal sits well within and assists the councils' aspirations set out in the Tourism & Heritage Strategy. The overall aim of the strategy is to promote and preserve Gravesham's identity, history, heritage, art, and culture, including its assets, whilst developing and enhancing the tourism offer that can contribute towards the economy and safeguard the heritage for future generations. The strategy identifies Gravesham's priorities for tourism and heritage and supports actions which will help the recovery of these sectors locally. It is aligned with the council's Corporate Plan, but extends to 2026, recognising the opportunities which will be forthcoming in the medium term and the council's longer-term vision and aspirations.

We note point 7.9.2 within the strategy will support a mix of quality and affordable visitor accommodation as well as hotel development within the town centre. [and] Seek to address gaps in other forms of visitor accommodation, including glamping, camping and caravanning, especially where that supports other ambitions within this strategy.

This proposal is both consistent with key points in the Tourism & Heritage Strategy and is compliant with local and national planning policies as will be discussed further in the accompanying Planning Statement.

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014:

- Core Strategy Policy CS01: Sustainable Development
- Core Strategy Policy CS02: Scale and Distribution of Development
- Core Strategy Policy CS07: Economy, Employment and Skills
- Core Strategy Policy CS09: Culture and Tourism
- Core Strategy Policy CS11: Transport
- Core Strategy Policy CS12: Green Infrastructure
- Core Strategy Policy CS18: Climate Change
- Core Strategy Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles
- Core Strategy Policy CS20: Heritage and the Historic Environment

Saved Policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994:

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- TC2 – Policy for Listed Buildings
- T1 – Impact of Development on the Highway Network
- T5 – Access to the Identified Highway Network

National Planning Policy Framework 2023:

- Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- Section 4 – Decision-making
- Section 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

3.1 Location

The proposed site at East Court Farm is located on the outskirts of Gravesend, 3 miles to the east of the town centre. The site is accessed off Church Lane, situated to the east of this public road and south of Lower Higham Road. Central Rochester is approx. 5 miles southeast of the application site and Central London is approximately 30 miles away.

Bus stops on Gravesend road to the south of the site are within 10 minutes' walk and provide public transport connections between Chatham and Gravesend to allow guests to reach the site without relying on cars. Likewise, an expansive network of public right-of-way routes will allow guests to explore the area on foot or bicycle, further reducing the need for cars.

Many tourist spots and attractions are within a suitable travel distance to the site such as Shornemead Fort, the Saxon Shoreway, Thames and Medway Trail and RSPB Cliffe Pools. It is perfectly suited for visitors looking to enjoy outdoor pursuits, the natural beauty of this area and the proposal will create a significant economic benefit to the surrounding area and local businesses.



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

3.2 Proposed Site Information

In the GLPCS (2014), it can be seen that the proposed site lies outside of any settlement boundaries. As such, the principal designation governing the site is 'Countryside', within the Green Belt.

East Court Farm is also in proximity to a RAMSAR Site, also classed as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). As such, the site design and landscaping approach has taken this into account to ensure no adverse impact. In addition, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been undertaken to ensure no adverse impact.

It is notable that East Court Farmhouse is classed as a Grade II Listed building. Due to screening from existing farm buildings and established vegetation, this heritage asset will not be impacted by the proposal.

The application site is made up of 9,150 sq.m of land under the ownership of the Applicant. Site boundaries are made up of trees and scrub to the east/northeast and existing farm buildings to the southwest, while the western site boundary is predominantly open field with hedgerows and dispersed trees along the public roads, Church Lane to the west and Lower Higham Road to the north.

Neighbouring residential properties along Church lane and Lower Higham Road will be screened from the proposed site by existing vegetation and farm buildings. As this development will be marketed as a peaceful retreat in nature, disturbance from guests should not be a concern.



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

3.3 Site Access

The glamping site will be reached via existing access off Church Lane which currently serves East Court Farm. Visibility is good in both directions from the site entrance on to the public road where the access lies perpendicular to, as can be seen in figures 3 and 4 below. Glamping guests will follow an existing track until it meets the new track to the glamping site parking and turning area. See Drawing 'Road and Access Plan' and 'Proposed Layout Plan' for additional information.

There should be no adverse impact to other road users due to additional traffic generated by the glamping site but staggered check-in and check-out times could be implemented to minimise impact.



Figure 3. Facing north on Church Lane from existing access.



Figure 4. Facing south on Church Lane from existing access.

3.4 Site Photos



1. Facing east along existing shared access to site.



2. Facing northwest at where new access to glamping site parking area will join existing.



3. Existing tennis court to west of area for glamping pods.



4. Alpacas kept to south of glamping pods area.



5. Looking north along clearing in scrub where footpath to area for Finman Retreats will run.



6. Facing west towards area for Finman Retreats within clearing surrounded by vegetation.



7. Existing scrub vegetation around proposed location for Finman Retreats.



8. Existing scrub vegetation around proposed location for Finman Retreats.



6. Looking southwest from area for Finman Retreats towards access track and farm buildings.

3.5 Flood Risk

It has been identified from flood maps that the site lies in very low zone with regard to surface water, river, and sea flooding. While there is an area at risk of flooding from rivers and sea to the west and northwest of the site, all proposed units and infrastructure are intentionally located outside this zone. It is therefore anticipated that a flood risk assessment is not required.

All hard landscaping will be constructed from permeable materials to allow water to freely infiltrate the ground. Likewise, a pebble border around the units will be provided for roof run-off. See drawing 'Drainage Plan' for additional information.

 Flood extent



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

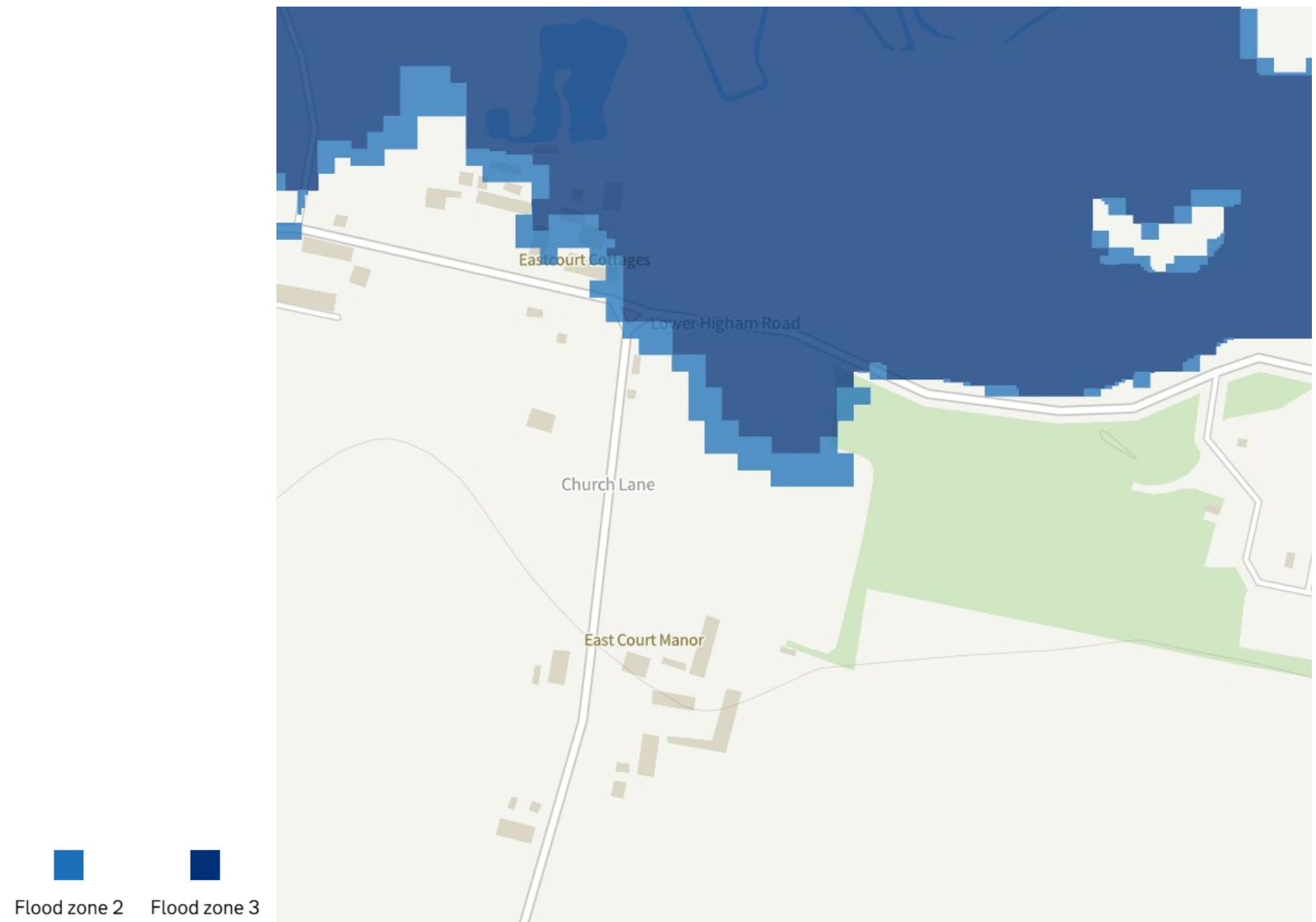


Figure 6. Map of Flood Risk from rivers and sea. Source: gov.uk

3.6 Public Rights of Way

A public footpath begins immediately north of the application site. This right of way will not be adversely affected by this proposal both during construction and after completion. Views will not be hindered due to screening from new and existing vegetation.

The extensive path network around the site will allow guests to explore the surrounding area and reach Gravesend town centre on foot or bicycle, reducing the need for cars. Routes will be promoted within the units to encourage guest use.

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



Figure 7. Map of Public rights of way – site indicated by green star. Source: footpathmap.co.uk

3.7 Justification for Proposed Use

The proposed glamping site will offer contemporary, luxury holiday accommodation to visitors within a suitable travel distance of London and further afield across the country, thus being suitable for weekend trips and short stays.

The area and surroundings are rich in tourist attractions such as Shornemead Fort, the Saxon Shoreway, Thames and Medway Trail and RSPB Cliffe Pools to name but a few. Nearby Gravesend and other towns offer plenty of cafes, restaurants and local shops for guests to visit and as such, the proposal will create an economic benefit to local businesses and services. The proposed accommodation will allow visitors to spend time outdoors to relax in a natural setting as well as explore the surrounding area.

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

The concept of luxury glamping is now gaining popularity throughout the UK, with standards and guests' expectations on the rise. It is intended that this site will be amongst the best available in the area and will provide an exciting new alternative, offering guests a secluded retreat in nature and high-quality, modern glamping accommodation.

4.1 Proposed Layout

On reaching the shared parking and turning area, guests can follow footpaths either north or south, depending on their choice of accommodation. Between the two glamping areas, an outdoor gym will be situated for shared guest use. Secure bicycle storage will be available next to each unit (Sheffield bike stands or similar).

Following the footpath south, luxury side-entry glamping pods will be located near to existing farm buildings, to the east of the existing tennis court. Here, 3no. pods will be situated around an area of meadow grass with wildflowers. From their large decking areas, guests can enjoy the peaceful countryside surroundings.

To the north of the central parking area, 4no. Finman Retreats will be situated in clearings within an area of woodland and scrub. Each will have a private barrel sauna and cold plunge to enjoy a unique wellness experience immersed in nature.

All guests will have access to a secure bicycle store, located next to each unit.

Existing and proposed planting of additional native shrubbery throughout the site will provide screening from neighbouring properties, and public road and provide guest privacy.

See drawing 'Proposed Layout Plan' for further information.



Figure 8. Proposed Layout Plan

4.2 Landscaping

The proposed site slopes downward from northeast to southwest and natural undulations across the site. To protect tree roots, Finman Retreats will be mounted above ground level on ground screws suitable for use in tree root protection areas. As such, no levelling will be required.

The units will be installed on adjacent ground levels, therefore will be at varying levels relative to each other. Any broken ground to install services will be re-instated (turfed where required).

The design of the glamping site has been developed with landscaping, ecology and biodiversity at the forefront. Landscape features include:

- Introduce new native shrubbery throughout the site for screening and habitat creation for small mammals and birds.
- Planting area of native meadow grass and wildflowers to benefit pollinating insects.
- Provide habitat opportunities with the installation of dead wood piles, bat and bird boxes.
- All external lighting will have a cowling to block upward directional light or be designed so that only downward directional light is output. In addition, a PIR motion sensor will only activate lighting when needed to minimise impact on wildlife.
- Construction works will only take place in daylight hours to minimise disturbance to bats and other nocturnal species which may be present.
- Existing vegetation will be protected with no removal of trees, hedgerows or specially identified areas of scrub for the proposed development.

4.3 Drainage Strategy

All units will be connected to 2no. new package water treatment plants (WTP) and associated pumping stations. Treated outfall from the WTP's will be directed to underground soakaways. The WTP for Finman Retreats will be located north of the shared carpark with soakaway under the parking area. A separate WTP and soakaway will be located to the west of the glamping pods.

Drainage from cold plunge tubs will be directed to a dedicated soakaway just south of the Finman Retreats. These drainage runs will require no pumping due to existing topography / natural fall in land.

New vehicular track and parking / turning area are to be constructed with a porous build-up on free-draining stone. All new footpaths are to be constructed with a build-up of permeable gravel with timber borders.

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

See drawing 'Drainage Plan' for further information.

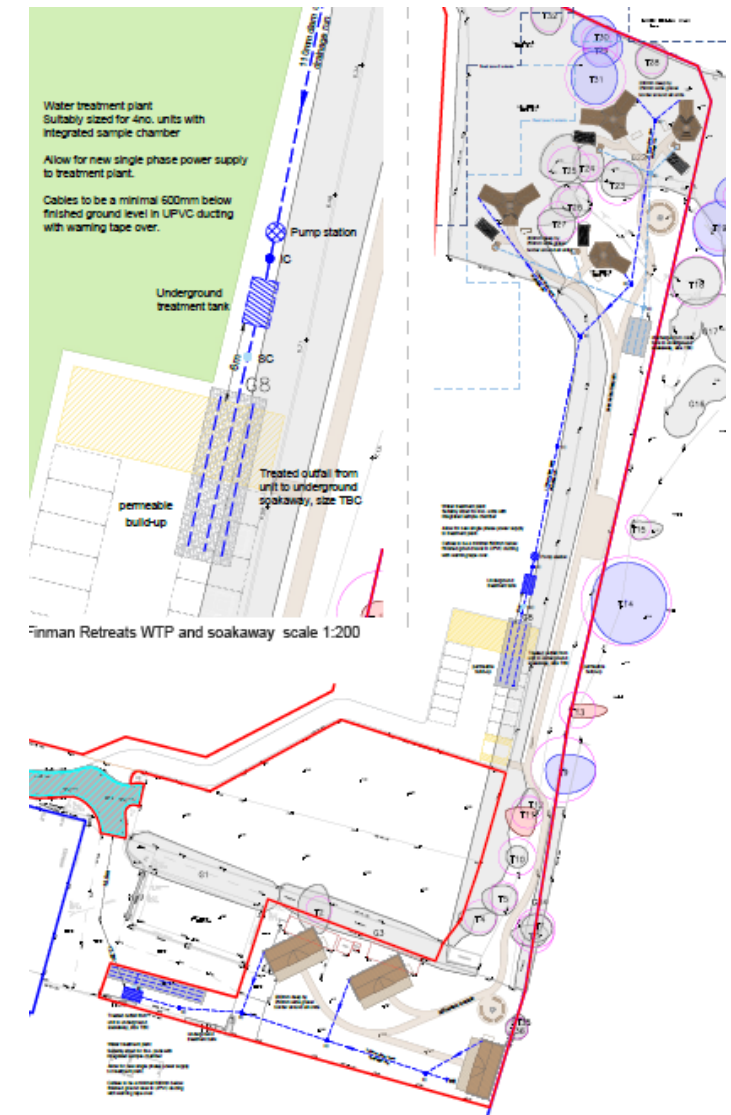


Figure 9. Proposed Drainage Plan

4.4 Lighting Strategy

12no. LED lighting bollards with PIR sensor will be provided along footpaths for safety when walking at night.

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

Benefits of low-level lighting bollards:

- LED mains are wired.
- Low-level height, only 40cm high.
- LED bulbs installed into this pillar lamp are in such a manner that they shine downwards onto cascading reflectors, keeping all light at low level.
- Integrated PIR sensor, keeping light levels low and only on when required.
- Range 2-8metres, set at 5m as shown.
- Lighting duration (5 seconds to 6 minutes) are configurable.
- Detects movement at an angle of 90 degrees.

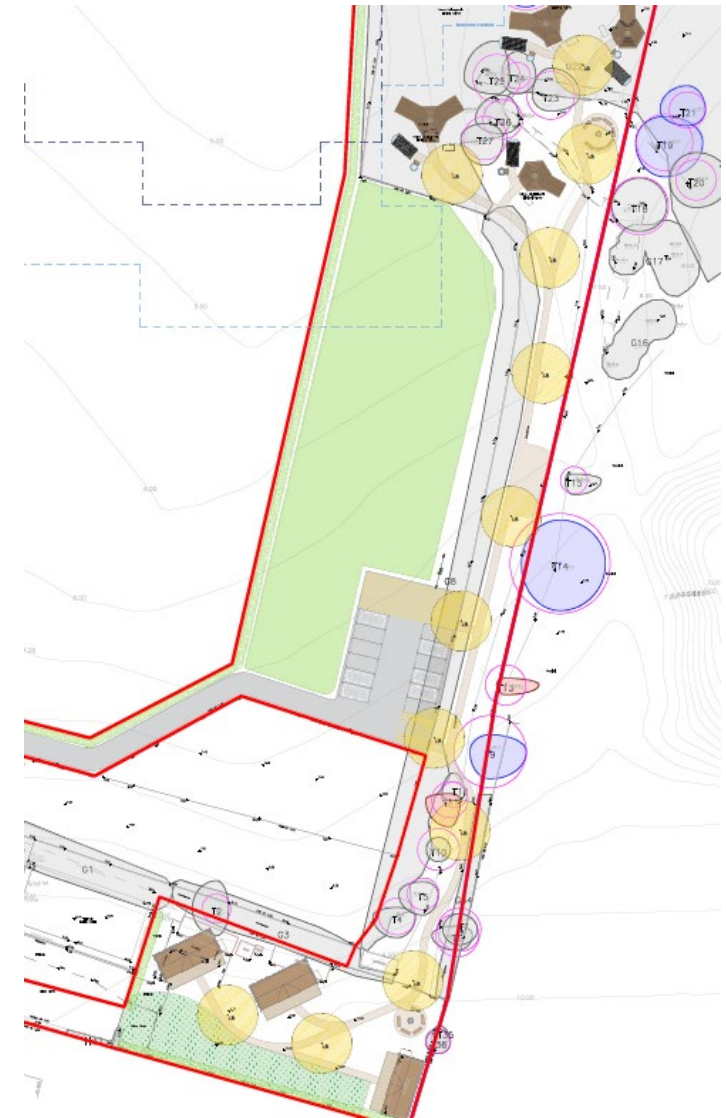


Figure 10. Lighting Plan

4.5 Proposed Units

3no. high-quality glamping pods (manufactured by Pod Factory) and 4no. Finman Retreats (manufactured by Logspan) are to be installed. The glamping pods will be constructed off-site and delivered as full units, ready to be connected to services. The Finman Retreats will be prefabricated and delivered in parts, to be assembled on site. See drawings 'Pod Plan and Elevations' and 'Finman Retreats Plans and Elevations' for more details.

All glamping pods and Finman Retreats are single-story units (approx. 3-4m tall) so no restriction of neighbouring views will occur. Since the units will be clad in natural materials, they will be in harmony with the surrounding landscape and will naturally weather over time.

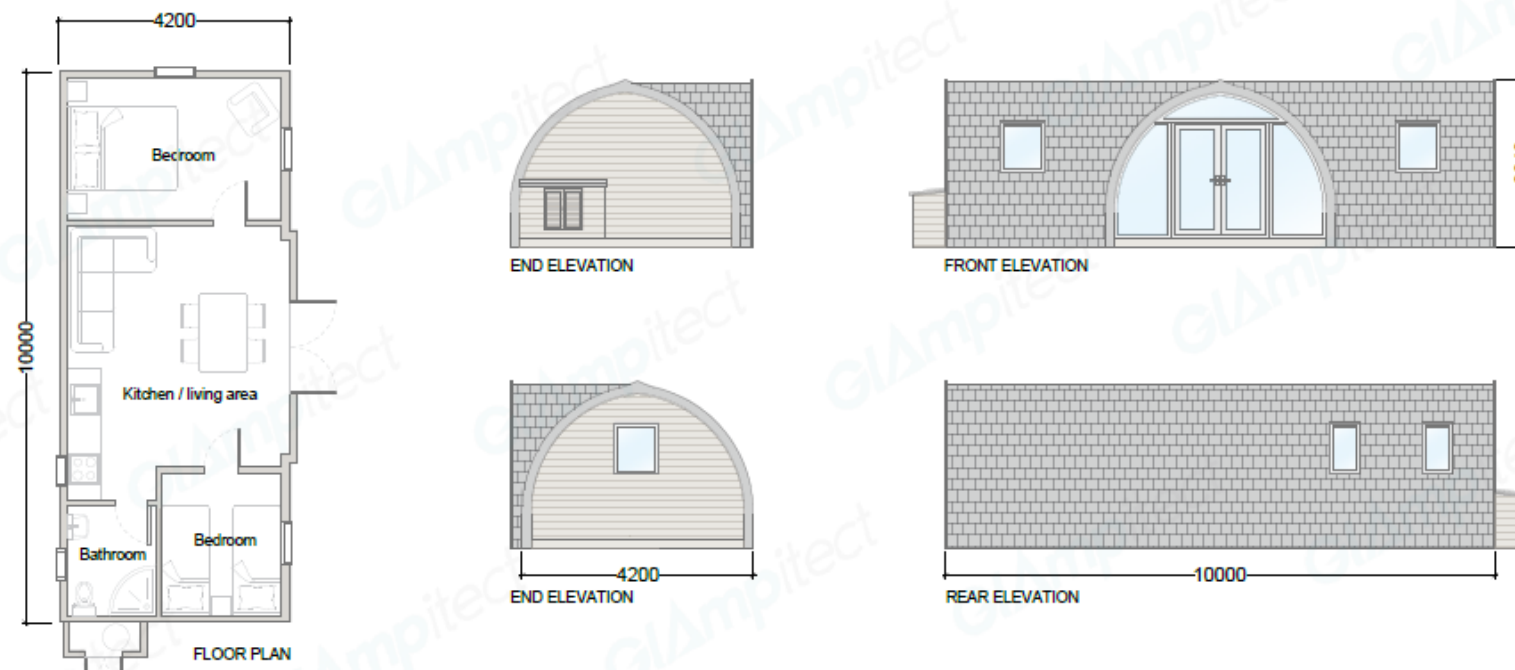


Figure 11. Proposed glamping pod drawings

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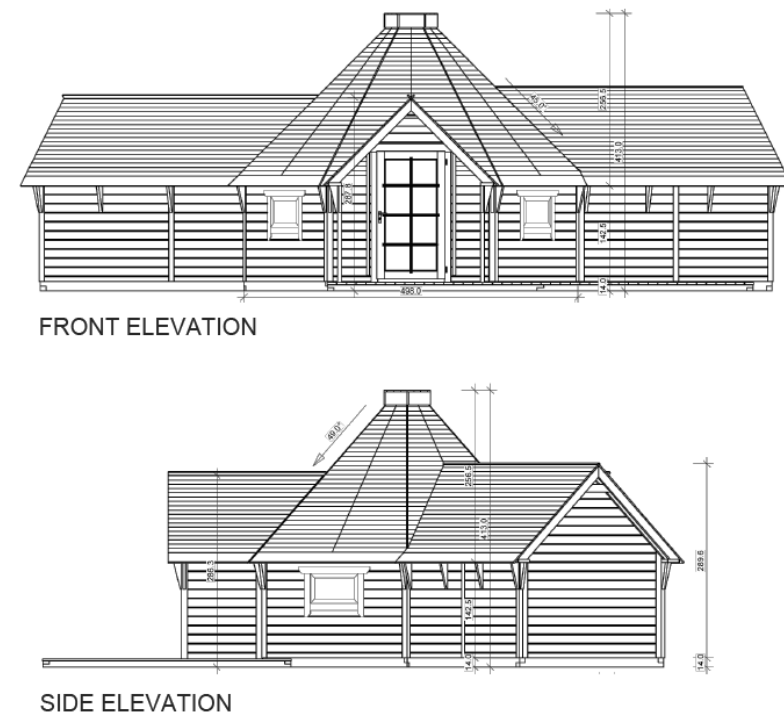
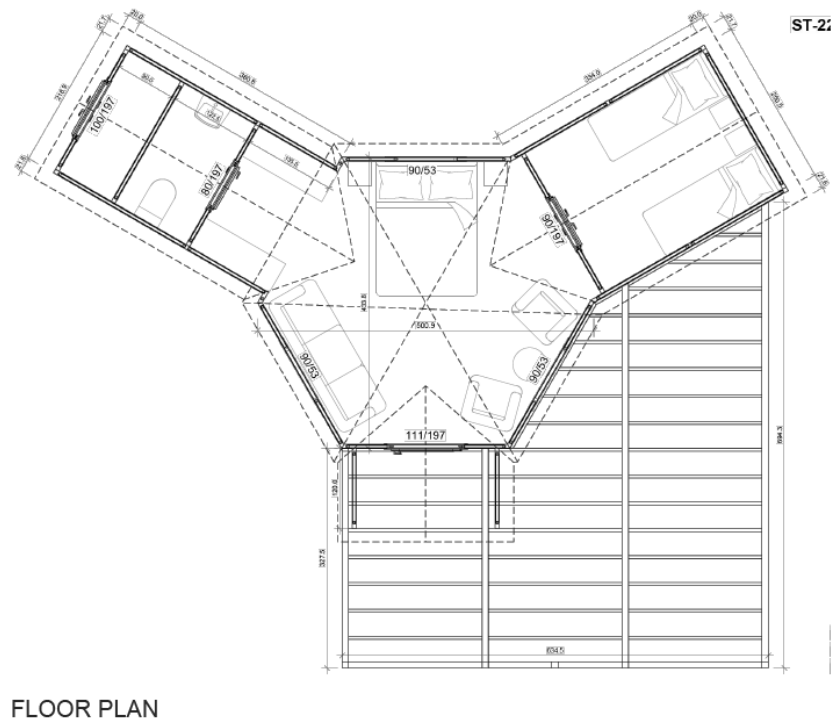


Figure 13. Proposed 2-4 person Finman Retreat drawings

4.6 Use

The site will be operated as a typical (year-round) holiday let, with the accommodation being rented out on a per-nightly basis. Patrons will likely be couples and small families as the chosen target markets by the site operators. Party groups will not be permitted.

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

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

Land Usage Item	Area Used	% Of Site
Ownership Area (Blue Line Boundary)	3.59 ha	-
Site Area (Red Line Boundary)	9,150 m ²	18.7 % (of blue line)
Glamping Units (7no. units)	261 m ²	2.8 % (of red line)
Barrel saunas (4no. units)	32 m ²	0.4 %
Existing and new permeable track, parking & turning area	1,100 m ²	12 %
Permeable footpaths and outdoor gym	500 m ²	5.5 %

4.7 Installation

Stage 1 – Access

The increase in traffic associated with the glamping site will be of a minimal impact on the surrounding area with a maximum of 12no. vehicles on-site at any one time. The existing access is of suitable condition and width to provide easy and safe vehicle access. The existing access will provide initial access for the installation of plant and services and will then become the main visitor access as well as provide access for any maintenance vehicles when the site is in operation.

10.2 Stage 2 - Groundwork

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

Units will connect to 2no. new package water treatment plants and soakaways. A dedicated soakaway will be installed for drainage from cold plunge tubs. See drawing 'Proposed Drainage Plan' for further information. Service ducting will be laid for power, water and telecoms as required. Pipework will be run for water and cables for electricity and telecoms will be pulled. All service installation and groundwork will be conducted by local contractors. All service trenches within tree RPA's are to be manually excavated.

10.3 Stage 3 – Unit Install

Glamping pods, barrel saunas and cold plunge tubs are to be prefabricated off-site and delivered as a full unit, ready to connect to services. Finman Retreats are to be delivered as a kit to be assembled on-site. By constructing and prefabricating the units off-site, construction waste will be kept to a minimum and a high-quality finish can be achieved more easily than traditional construction. The choice of all structures aims to minimise disruption to the site as much as possible, due to their temporary nature.

Any new native trees, hedgerows, shrubbery, meadow grass and wildflowers planted will match species of the local area as closely as possible.

10.4 Stage 4 – Roads, Parking & Clean up

No more plant/transport access is required other than to build up the new vehicular track and parking / turning area and footpaths. These will be constructed with permeable materials to avoid the use of concrete/tarmac and a dedicated surface water drainage system. Footpaths in proximity to existing trees are to be of a 'no-dig' construction to protect tree roots.

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

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

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

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

An efficient operational waste management and recycling strategy will be carried out by the operator as required by the council. The waste and recycling bins will be located near to the site entrance for easy access and will be moved to the public roadside by the site operator on collection days.

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

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

The operator also intends to use local businesses where possible to carry out groundworks and installation of services, utilising local suppliers and local labour. The development will also support local employment with the creation of several roles for cleaning and site maintenance.

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

Through a thoughtful and considered approach, the design for this proposal emphasises the integration of a sustainable glamping development with the rural landscape to ensure a comfortable and enjoyable experience for all guests. The project aims to promote sustainability and a harmonious connection between the built environment and the natural surroundings. Based on the points discussed throughout this document, it is reasonable to suggest that the proposed glamping accommodation is warranted in this location, to cater for increasing visitor demand, without sacrificing the area's beauty, ecology or heritage assets.