



architects + designers

Planning Statement

Revision 04

SITE ADDRESS

Unit 1, The Old Mill Pond, Upper Mills Car Park, Upper Mill, Canal Side, Slaithwaite, HD7 5HA

DATE

February 2026 (latest update, 30 April 2026)

1 Application

This Planning Statement is to be provided with the retrospective application for Full Planning Consent seeking temporary permission for a high quality, affordable sauna and cold plunge experience, including a 14-person mobile sauna, cold plunge pools, on previously vacant land beside Upper Mills car park.

This statement has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (DMPO), the Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 and National Planning Policy Guidance.

This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the drawings that support this planning application.

2 Applicant, Location + Site Area

The land + site is owned by M&M Haskell Ltd, owners also of the mills and the land adjoining them.

The Applicant, iglu sauna (trading name for Authentic Sauna Experiences) has operated in Hebden Bridge since December 2023 with a well-established community of local users who use the facilities for their physical and mental health. Given that many guests travelled from Kirklees, and the lack of affordable sauna and cold provision in the area, the applicant has opened this venue in Slaithwaite.

The site is the most Westerly part of the Upper Mills complex + surrounding car park, shown in blue, a long strip of urban land close to the Huddersfield Narrow Canal with the tow path (Green Belt) to the North, Shaw Carr Woods (Green Belt) to the West and the Colne River to the South. Slaithwaite Conservation Area is some 200m to the East of the site.

The application plot, shown in red, is 270m² approximately 15m x 20m. The closest building is Upper Mill, due East past the grade level carpark, 90m from the site.

Historically the land has been used by the Mill complex but has been a disused flat land for years. The ground is flat with some border trees along the tow path and more mature trees towards the Green belt + Colne River.

The site has existing underground utilities, electricity, water and drainage including sewerage provided by the landowner.

The applicant is leasing the plot of land from the landowner on a non-permanent basis.

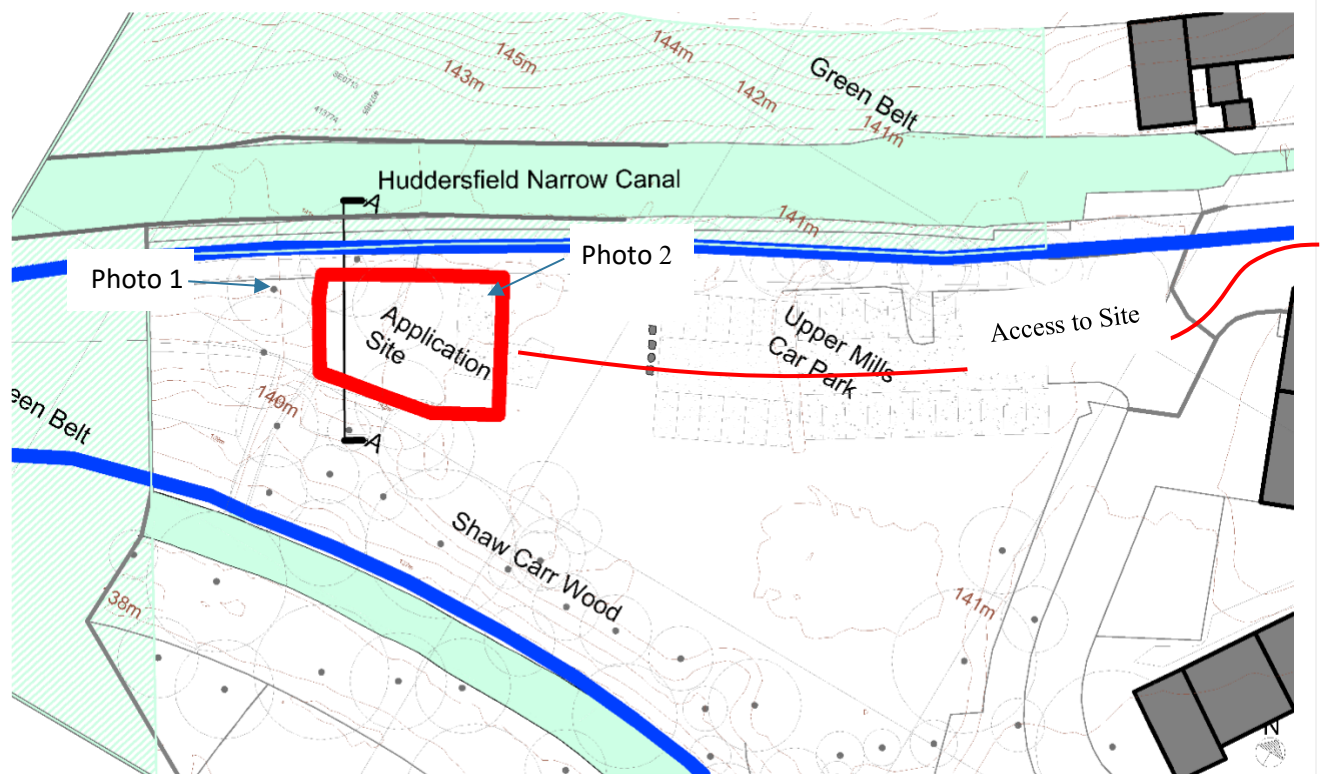


Image 1



Photo 1



	Photo 2
3	Principles + Concepts The application involves the change of use of vacant land to a sui generis wellness facility, providing accessible health and leisure services to the local community and visitors to the area. The development consists of semi-mobile, temporary, and moveable structures and does not involve any permanent construction or groundworks. The perimeter is natural willow fencing, 1.8m high. Prior to January 2026, the land has not been in active commercial, residential, or community use. The sauna brings the site into productive use, delivering clear social, health and economic benefits while maintaining the ability to revert to its original condition or transition to a future strategic use. The site lies outside of the green belt boundary in an area of land adjacent to a mill complex that is allocated as unspecified urban land. Development within this land, is generally considered to be acceptable in principle, subject to siting, design, impact on its location, residential amenity concerns and any other material planning issues.
4	Social + Economic Context In recent years, the popularity of saunas and cold-water immersion facilities has grown significantly across the UK, supported by increasing recognition of their physical and mental health benefits. Saunas offer a counter to the loneliness epidemic, a place to meet others for some users; or for others, a space to relax and calm down. They offer significant physical health benefits such as improved circulation, muscle recovery, and stress reduction. Mental health benefits are notable - Finland, with more saunas than any other country, is the happiest country in the world! Slaithwaite is home to a wide range of walking groups, runners, cyclists, wild swimmers, many of whom would welcome the addition of an affordable sauna on their doorstep. iglu sauna, operating in Slaithwaite, has already become a valued part of the local community. Many guests have shared, both verbally and through online reviews, the huge benefits to their health and well-being. See a selection of recent reviews under Appendix B. The sauna contributes to the local economy, with 4 employees at above the Real Living Wage, and works with local creatives, practitioners and tradespeople. Most visitors are local to Kirklees, nevertheless it also attracts tourists from Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, and beyond. Presently around 150 people use the sauna each week. Many of these 'stay and spend' elsewhere such as stopping for lunch, a drink, going to festivals and events, or shopping in Slaithwaite centre. The facility provides a complementary offer to existing independent businesses located in Slaithwaite Mills and the area more generally.

	This proposal supports the growth of a small, community-rooted enterprise that complements the character of Slaithwaite and contributes to the diversity of its visitor economy. It also provides an example of low-impact economic development that aligns with Kirklees' ambitions for healthy living, inclusive growth, and sustainable tourism.
5	Site Design The site design ensures a harmonious flow between each stage of the sauna journey to the next. The sauna has been positioned to offer an unobstructed view of the River Colne and woodland beyond. The temporary structures include: Sauna – 2.4m W x 6m L timber clad sauna cabin; Cold plunge pools – 1.1m x 1.1m plastic baths clad in timber paneling; Office – 3.6m w x 2.3m d Nordic Spruce Wooden events kiosk; Secure Shed – 1.2m x 1.15m Shiplap T+G cladding with security Slit window + locking bar; Perimeter fence – 1.8m H natural willow weave fence. All structures on site are under 2.5m in height and there is no requirement for foundations or hard-standing. The site includes geo-tile flooring mat with pea-gravel along the 'wet' areas and main thoroughfare. The remaining plot has a woodchip floor surface. No impermeable floor surfaces are being used. 1.2m x 0.8m A-board floor mounted sign is placed near the entrance fence. Security signage (CCTV) is clearly displayed. Festoon lighting is used when necessary during the evening, at low-level to avoid light spill + preserve the natural setting No flood lighting is used. Grey water drainage from the plunge pools, showers and staff sink, is directed into the mains combined drain, which combines with the mains drains on site. Showers are encouraged before + after using the facility. Run-off water from the showers is collected beneath the shower platform and channeled into the mains drains back to the mill, see plans.
6	Access + Transport Access to the site is via the path and car park owned by landowner, or the Canal Tow path owned by the Canal + River Trust. The access route to the public highway, Howgate Road, is shown clearly in a red boundary as the access to the site. The car park and the access route are not owned by the applicant, permission has been agreed and the car parking facilities whilst useful and customers have the option to use them, they are not part of the sauna business strategy or this proposal. The facility is within walking distance of the centre of Slaithwaite, 600m from Slaithwaite train station. Many users will arrive on foot or bicycle as it is within 1km of the residential area of the

	village. The canal towpath is a frequently used + well maintained route enjoyed frequently during the day. The proposal has bicycle storage for up to 10 bikes within the boundary. The existing adjacent Upper Mill car park overflow provides parking for 20 cars and is available to the guests. No additional car parking is formed as part of this application. The site itself is wheelchair accessible. Due to the saunas being transportable, their raised elevation will limit/ restrict access for wheelchair users, as with the cold plunges.
	Existing footpaths along the tow path and through the woodland along the river will not be altered. No Public Rights of Way are being obstructed or diverted with this proposal.
7	Environmental Impact The development has been carefully designed to minimize its environmental footprint. The following measures are in place: • The sauna unit is heated using a high-efficiency wood-burning sauna stove. • Active and public transport options are promoted to reduce vehicular emissions travelling to the site Paragraphs 131 to 135 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should ensure developments are visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and history, and maintain a strong sense of place. Paragraph 187 adds that decisions should take account of the effects of pollution on health, amenity, and the natural environment.
8	Ecology + Biodiversity Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) - De minimis exemption (regulation 4) The de minimis exemption is designed to cover planning permission for developments of such a small scale that no or minimal loss to habitat value is entailed. It is of note that two conditions must be met for this exemption to apply: firstly, the development must not impact an onsite priority habitat (defined as a habitat specified in a published list); secondly, the development must impact no more than 25m² of onsite habitat with a biodiversity value greater than zero, and no more than five meters in length of onsite linear habitat. This proposal does not meet the first condition of BNG. This land type is not one of the Priority Habitats under the Section 41 list. The proposal does not meet the second condition, as the proposal has no on-site habitat loss. Land has not been excavated, trees and hedges have not been removed or felled and there is no proposal for a solid impermeable floor surface. The proposal also incorporates on-site ecological enhancement measures to deliver biodiversity net gain, consistent with the requirements of NPPF Paragraph 187 and Kirklees Local Plan GN3. This includes raised planters supporting pollinator-friendly species.

While it is not anticipated that a BNG is required due to the retrospective nature of the application, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been conducted and is submitted to inform any ecological assessment.

The existing plot ground surface consists of mostly compact earth + low-cover vegetation. There is a 70m² plot of concrete remaining from a previous mill building. The boundary partly covers the concrete (46m²). There is one large tree within the plot that is untouched including branches and surface roots. No other trees or tree roots are affected by the sauna.

Photos of site prior to moving on indicate the tree and the existing concrete hard standing and highlighted in red below.



9 Safety + Security

CCTV cameras focus only on the entrance and within the site boundary. The site is able to be remotely monitored 24/7 from the cameras along the internal site boundaries.

The site is surrounded by strong wicker fencing where access is easier, at a minimum of a 1.8m height. The gate at the site entrance is locked with a padlock.

	The sauna, office + sheds are also locked.
10	Residential amenity Existing houses on Rotcher Lane to the North of the canal are in an elevated position to the site + between 50-90m away. With the local residents in mind, the site has been designed to operate in a way that is respectful of residents. Operating hours are between 9am – 8:30pm daily. Sessions are pre-booked, typically lasting 60 minutes, with a buffer time between sessions for guests to get changed before and after their sauna. Up to 14 guests are able to book at once in the sauna. Sessions are staggered so that not all 14 guests arrive or leave at the same time. The placement of planters, fencing, sauna unit, and storage units are arranged to minimise any noise on surrounding streets. Noise levels have been assessed during opening and closing hours and are minimal. The filter and chiller units' motors and fans for the plunge pools make a small amount of noise, which is barely audible at a distance of 10m. Temporary sails have been mounted that provide some level of visual barrier between Rotcher lane and the sauna site.
11	Policy Review The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), last updated February 2025, sets out the government's planning policies for England. The Kirklees Local Plan, adopted February 2019, provides a framework for guiding planning development. Promoting healthy and safe communities Paragraph 96 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible, and support healthy lives. Paragraph 98 further encourages planning for community facilities and services that enhance community well-being, and safeguarding valued spaces. Most of our sauna sessions are communal, meaning that guests share the space with others whom they may not know. They often enter as strangers and leave as friends.

The sauna and cold plunge offer well-recognised health benefits, such as improved cardiovascular health, circulation, and recovery. They also complement other physical activities that are common in the area, such as running, walking, and wild swimming. The outdoor setting is part of the experience and is carefully maintained.

Saunas also offer mental health benefits. Guests regularly report feeling calmer and more balanced after a session. Our pricing model includes affordable options, and we are exploring targeted reduced-cost sessions for those who may not otherwise attend, including via social prescribing.

The sauna offers a communal space, with seating available before or after sessions. Located close to the town centre, it is well integrated with the local community and complements nearby shops, cafés, and services.

Paragraph 103 of the NPPF highlights the importance of access to high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity as a contributor to health, well-being, nature enhancement, and climate resilience.

List of relevant Kirklees Local Plan policies:

LP47 - Healthy, active and safe lifestyles: Encourages access to open spaces, sports, leisure, and cultural facilities to promote health and well-being.

LP48 - Community facilities and services: Supports the provision, retention, and enhancement of accessible community facilities.

LP50 - Sport and physical activity: Protects and enhances sport and leisure facilities to encourage physical activity and healthier lifestyles.

Supporting sustainable transport

Paragraphs 115 to 118 of the NPPF encourage developments that prioritise pedestrian and cycle movements, facilitate access to high-quality public transport, and minimise transport-related emissions.

Our proposal meets these aims by adopting a sustainable, low-impact approach to access and movement, appropriate to the scale and nature of the development. The facility does not generate significant traffic and is served primarily by pedestrian access, with users encouraged to walk, cycle, or use public transport.

The development:

- Prioritises sustainable travel modes, especially walking and public transport
- Avoids material impact on the highway network - staggered visits
- Requires no modifications to public highways or new parking infrastructure

The scheme also:

- Gives clear priority to pedestrian access and active travel
- Maintains level, walkable ground suitable for those with reduced mobility (though access into sauna units themselves is limited due to their temporary nature)
- Provides a simple, uncluttered layout that respects the natural setting
- Includes space for emergency and servicing vehicle access if required, although use is minimal

The development does not trigger the need for a full travel plan or transport assessment under Paragraph 118, as it will not generate significant volumes of movement. However, a clear visitor management approach is in place via pre-booking and public transport recommendations (See website), including visualisations like maps of how to walk to the site, and a video showing the walking route from a central location in town.

List of relevant Kirklees Local Plan policies:

LP20 - Sustainable travel: Promotes development served by public transport, walking, and cycling, encouraging sustainable travel options.

Supporting business investment and expansion

Paragraph 85 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand, and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

The sauna is part of a growing wellness sector in the UK. It contributes to the local economy by providing paid employment, supporting nearby hospitality businesses, and drawing visitors to Slaithwaite. We pay above the Real Living Wage and prioritise ethical employment and community collaboration. It will also boost the visitor economy, seeking recognition from the British Sauna Society, attracting tourists from across the North and beyond.

List of relevant Kirklees Local Plan policies:

LP7 - Efficient and effective use of land and buildings: Encourages optimal use of land and buildings.

LP9 - Supporting skilled and flexible communities and workforce: Encourages development that creates local employment opportunities and supports skills development.

	This application is for a temporary sauna and cold plunge facility, which is valued by local residents and fully in line with the Council's agendas of promoting healthy and safe communities, sustainable transport, and supporting the economy and good jobs. The proposal is seeking a temporary 5-year planning permission and will be removed at the end of this period. The proposal addresses all relevant aspects of the planning policies in the Local Plan and is in accordance with guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework, and therefore should be supported by the LPA.
	Appendices
13	Appendix A: Significant planning approvals In the past five years a number of outdoor saunas and cold plunges have been granted planning permission. These have occurred in Conservation Areas, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the Heritage Coast. Much reference has been made to the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Some examples are below: Brighton (13/01/2025) BH2025/00064 Application for temporary siting of mobile sauna pods, plunge pools and office on Brighton beach. Granted until 2030. Officers noted 100s of letters of support, including from local councillors. Also, that the 'use for leisure/tourism purposes, with relatively few structures, minimal environmental impact, and a small physical scale is considered appropriate in this sensitive environment'. Weymouth, Dorset (12/12/2024) P/FUL/2024/06068 Application for siting and use of sauna on Weymouth beach. Granted with officers saying: the site is in a sustainable location, being of wider economic and community benefit and complimentary to existing adjacent uses, of acceptable, diminutive design and not considered to be any significant harm to neighbouring residential amenity. Isles of Scilly (19/04/2024) P/24/010 Granted change of use and permission for a sauna in a garden. Site is within Conservation Areas, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the Heritage Coast. Liverpool Princes Dock (09/02/2024) 24F/0365 Floating sauna, plunge pools, showers, and associated facilities. Permission granted for five-year period. Pembrokeshire Coast (05/06/2024) NP/24/0155/FUL Temporary change of use to site a sauna on a harbour granted. Planning officer noted 'sustainable development principle through its contribution towards the Welsh Ministers' wellbeing objective of supporting safe, cohesive and resilient communities.'

	Wareham (18/12/2024) P/FUL/2024/02833 Erection of sauna and associated facilities on the Jurassic Coast. Granted for three years with the Planning Officer saying 'permission should be granted for sustainable development unless specific policies in the NPPF indicate otherwise; The proposal will support the visitor economy, offer an additional community facility and provide local economic benefits. There is not considered to be any significant harm to residential amenity.'
14	Appendix B: Guest testimonials for iglu sauna in Slaithwaite A selection of testimonials from guests are included below. Names are available upon request. Iglu Sauna's second site is as delightful as their first. Although sat at the end of a car park they have created a tranquil sauna experience from natural materials, fairy lights, great facilities surrounded by trees, between a brook and a canal. The staff are welcoming and helpful. The sauna, cold water pods, changing facilities and everything else are in great condition and make for a relaxing and fun time. The proximity to cafes, shops and walk opportunities mean this is possibly my favourite sauna location of the thirteen different ones I have visited this year. [Slaithwaite] I was so delighted to hear that Slaithwaite is going to have a local wood fired sauna and cold plunge, and oh my how it didn't disappoint. Been going every week since they opened and it's steadily becoming a part of my weekly routine. Really recommend trying them if you are looking for a place to unwind and reset ❤️ [Slaithwaite] What a fantastic place. Great surroundings, peaceful with a wonderful sauna and three good sized cold plunge pools. Friendly and helpful staff. We had a very enjoyable hour resting and relaxing, couldn't think of a better way to spend a Sunday lunchtime. We will definitely be back. Thank you. [Slaithwaite] Excellent! A nice set up between the towpath and the river, but sufficiently secluded to feel private. A big wood fired sauna, three plunge pools, showers and changing rooms. Plus really nice staff, pleasant, helpful and chatty. I left my sauna hat here by mistake and it was waiting for me on my next visit. A really good addition to the local area. [Slaithwaite] What a beautiful, welcoming pop up Sauna and Cold plunge. The staff are very friendly and helpful. I come here for health reasons, I would highly recommend. Very relaxing and very beneficial. Get booked in you will not be disappointed ❤️ [Slaithwaite]

“Having the Iglu sauna in Hebden has been amazing for me. I suffer from Asthma and my breathing has been much better since attending the sauna and my general wellbeing has improved.

I have often met health professionals in the sauna who say that it is a very important part of many treatments and it can help many conditions including auto-immune conditions and alleviate thyroid conditions and other serious illnesses.

I also feel it is a community building service and while it offers huge health benefits, it is also important for wellbeing and mental health. The quiet saunas are meditative and healing.

At the moment I attend the sauna every week. [Hebden Bridge]

“I have found [iglu sauna] so helpful for myself and I have brought friends who are under stress or dealing with mental health to show them a new coping skill. I myself was diagnosed with being in sympathetic overdrive, (fight/flight) due to burn out. I have found it to quieten my overthinking and running thoughts.

Also, the cold-water therapy, I get my neck under for my vagus nerve as the other medical option I have was something called a stellar ganglion block, injection to the neck with many complications.” [Hebden Bridge]

“I am a regular sauna goer with a membership and value having such a relaxing natural experience close to me. I use the sauna to de-stress as a new mum looking after a baby and toddler.

What started as a way for me and my friend to unwind after a tough week has become a more social endeavour that I look forward to and definitely miss it when I can't attend. I have recommended the sauna to other people and everyone who has come along are as hooked as I am. I even have two friends from Nottingham who insist on coming every time they are up!” [Hebden Bridge]

There is a real lack of saunas in the UK generally and I have found it very difficult over the years to find a suitable sauna. Many saunas don't have cold plunge pools, have required me to pay for gym memberships that I don't want, have been overly crowded with men where as a woman I have been made to feel uncomfortable and/or have been noisy environments.

Since finding Iglu I travel 45 min each way to come to the sauna 1x a week for a silent session and have noticed a huge difference to my mental health. I am so grateful to have this space and really

appreciate the silent sessions. They offer some much-needed space & time to decompress silently within the company of others...a unique experience in today's world." [Hebden Bridge]

"Iglu Sauna is a true asset to the Hebden Bridge and wider Calder Valley community. In terms of wellness, the benefits are many; stress relief and endorphin boost to mention a few. What I love the most about the sauna experience is that it offers a bonding social activity that is not centred around drinking alcohol. It's lovely to chat to other members of the community while warming the bones from deep within.

Nordic countries are amongst the happiest in the world and have a long history and deep cultural connection with saunas. This begs the question; why are we not adopting this ancient tradition to bring people together, as well as ease the cold winter nights?! It is also notable that people have travelled from surrounding boroughs and cities to partake in the sauna experience which increases activity and tourism in town. Now that we have Iglu Sauna, I don't know what I'd do without it!"

[Hebden Bridge]

"We have been customers of Iglu Sauna since Dec 2023.

We visit Iglu Sauna 2-3 times a week and took up a monthly membership as soon as they became available – we go to de-stress to relax and we really feel it is such a positive addition to services in our community without having to travel to e.g. Todmorden or Sowerby Bridge to access similar services at a sports centre.

Some of the reasons why we love Iglu Sauna and would support a permanent license/ home in its present location are:

1. It is a fantastic community accessible resource that supports wellbeing and good mental health – right in the heart of one of the residential areas of Hebden, where many residents like ourselves do not have outdoor space (due to being an over-dwelling).
2. We walk there, our neighbours walk there – there is no requirement to drive or park for many of the users of Iglu Sauna.
3. Every time we go – we meet neighbours, locals and visitors that appreciate the benefits of an activity that is relaxing (and not based around alcohol or drinking, as that is now the majority of the socialising in Hebden Bridge town centre due to the increase in bars / cafes / restaurants selling alcohol and the large numbers of visitors that attracts and the associated anti-social behaviour, including noise, littering and inappropriate behaviour)

4. Sam the owner of Iglu Sauna is very clear on how he wants the sauna to be run e.g. no drinking , a quiet space , and is respectful of the local community - no early / late sessions (all end by 2030) , sharing info on walking /public transport options

We really cannot see how this can be considered anything but a positive business and facility for the community and visitors, it is an oasis of calm and wellbeing.”

[Hebden Bridge]

End of testimonials.

End of Document