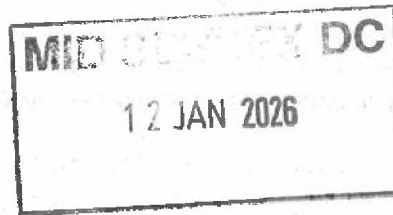


**CUCKFIELD COTTAGE HOMES
CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION
CHURCH PLATT, CUCKFIELD
WEST SUSSEX, RH17 5**

8 January 2026

Planning Department
Mid Sussex District Council
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH16 1SS



Dear Sirs

Re: Cuckfield Cottage Homes – Application reference DM/25/3209

The trust's planning consultant, Sadler Planning, felt it would be helpful if trustees explained the background to this application and in particular, the rationale for proposing two additional units of accommodation in the proposed development of Cottage Homes.

First, it should be understood that the application has been four years in gestation and came from an acknowledgement by trustees of the accelerating deterioration of the general fabric of the building and acceptance that the design and layout of the current accommodation fell below contemporary standards. In the short term, these design shortcomings could be prejudicial to the safety and wellbeing of our residents but longer-term, they could impact the trust's ability to attract new occupants and therefore put at risk its future financial stability.

These defects include:

- Poor spatial planning
- Accommodation that is overall too small by contemporary standards
- Unsatisfactory, potentially dangerous vertical separation of living quarters and toilet facilities; this, coupled with steep staircases creates a particular problem given the age of our occupants
- Poor sound attenuation
- Poor fire separation and the use of asbestos as a separation material
- Damp ingress caused by 19th century design defects.

After lengthy discussions, trustees concluded that doing nothing was not an option and embarking on a programme of minor alterations would not address the more fundamental issue of securing the trust's future financial security. A more radical approach was needed.

Conservation specialist Jonathan Cerowski was therefore appointed as the trust's architect to report on design options, including the technical viability of increasing the number of residential units, this last element of his brief the result of research into local demand for accommodation of the type provided by Cottage Homes and realisation that the trust's long-term finances would strengthen significantly if more units could be provided. Additional units, coupled with the improvements proposed to the existing flats would also widen the scope of the trust's eligibility for grant funding.

It should be noted at this point that Jonathan Cerowski is, separately, Inspecting Architect for the adjacent Holy Trinity Church and therefore empathetic with Cottage Homes' immediate environment.

Jonathan produced a number of alternative schemes before trustees settled on one that largely fulfilled the brief and was financially and economically viable. Trustees commissioned a cost plan and undertook more detailed investigations into sources of grant funding and the availability of commercial finance in order to produce a sustainable business model. The scheme was then developed further for discussion with MSDC

Correspondence and meetings with the planning and conservation officers of MSDC from 2021 through to 2024 resulted in a series of demands for compromise of the original design which MSDC officers said if adopted, would enable the scheme to be put forward for planning consent. Analysis showed however that certain of MSDC's demands increased costs to such a degree that the scheme's viability would be irretrievably damaged.

The scheme which is the subject of this application moves the design as far as the trustees feel possible towards meeting the MSDC's requirements, whilst maintaining the scheme's financial integrity and the trust's ability to fund the proposals. Trustees believe the trust's future financial resilience is greatly strengthened in the long term by the improved space, design and flexibility of the existing units and this resilience is further enhanced by the additional income stream provided by the two new units of accommodation.

Currently the trust is progressing discussions with specialist firm Almshouse Consortium Ltd to access grant funding from Homes England. As part of this process the trust has changed its status to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), facilitating access to commercial funding.

It is hoped these discussions can progress to a conclusion following the grant of planning consent, enabling work on the scheme to commence during 2027.

The trustees are unified in their commitment to undertaking this scheme of improvement which they believe is critical to securing the future of Cottage Homes and would be pleased to meet with Members to discuss any aspect of the design or financial arrangements that support the proposals.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Valentine', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

The Rev'd Daniel Valentine
Vicar, The United Benefice of Holy Trinity, Cuckfield
and St Mary Magdalene, Bolney
Chairman of Trustees