

# PLANNING STATEMENT

## SEPTEMBER 2025



Three Storey extension to Wickenden Manor to provide further accommodation, meeting rooms and kitchen. Extension and change of use of stables to create further accommodation. Erection of extension to Lodge. New hard surface tennis court. Installation of solar panel arrays within the walled garden (resubmission of approval DM/20/4179)

Wickenden Manor Chilling Street Sharpthorne East Grinstead West Sussex RH19 4JB

## INTRODUCTION

This Planning Statement forms part of an application for a three storey extension to Wickenden Manor to provide further accommodation, meeting rooms and kitchen. Extension and change of use of stables to create further accommodation. Erection of extension to Lodge. New hard surface tennis court. Installation of solar panel arrays within the walled garden (resubmission of approval DM/20/4179) at Wickenden Manor Chilling Street Sharpthorne East Grinstead West Sussex RH19 4JB.

This Statement has been prepared in accordance with the Royal Town Planning Institute Code of Conduct.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The site consists of a large manor house set in large grounds, also containing two dwellings and other outbuildings. There are two separate accesses from Chilling Street to the east and north.

The Manor House is approached via a long drive with a secluded walled garden and significant front gardens. The Manor House sits higher in the land than the surrounding landscape which falls steeply. The main entrance to the Manor House is via the “rear”, with the main frontage overlooking the extensive grounds.

To the north of the Manor House is “The Lodge” building, a two storey property.

To the south west of the Manor House is a tennis court, collection of stables and a pheasantry.

The site is located within High Weald area of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) that is also within a countryside area of development restraint, as defined in the Mid Sussex District Plan. It is also located along 7 kilometres of the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).



## PLANNING STATEMENT - SEPTEMBER 2025

### Wickenden Manor



## PLANNING HISTORY

DM/20/4179

Three Storey extension to Wickenden Manor to provide further accommodation, meeting rooms and kitchen. Extension and change of use of stables to create further accommodation. Erection of conservatory to Lodge. New hard surface basketball and tennis court. Installation of solar panel arrays within the walled garden (Amended plans received 22 March 2021)

Approved – 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021

No: DM/24/0121

Variation of condition No: 2 of planning application DM/20/4179 to amend the approved plans to allow for design changes.

Approved – 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024

DM/24/0363

Discharge of condition 5 in relation to DM/20/4179.

Approved – 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024

DM/24/0382

Discharge of conditions 6 and 8 in relation to DM/20/4179.

Approved – 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024

DM/24/0439

Discharge of planning condition nos. 3, 4 and 7 relating to planning application DM/20/4179.

Approved – 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024

DM/24/2011

Confirmation that commencement of development has taken place pertaining to DM/20/4179 / DM/24/0121.

Approved – 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024

It therefore important to acknowledge that planning permissions DM/20/4179 / DM/24/0121 has lawfully commenced and could be completed in their entirety with no further submissions to planning.

## PLANNING POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that any determination should be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Local Planning Authority is Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

The proposal has been considered within the context of National and Local Planning Policy, and the key policies are summarised below.

### National Planning Policy Framework

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets the overall direction of the National Planning Policy.

Paragraph 8 outlines that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles. With regards to social, this includes supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high-quality built environment.

Paragraph 10 confirms that the common theme running through National Planning Policy is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 88 states that planning policies and decisions should enable:

- the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
- the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
- sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and
- the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

Paragraph 89 states that planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any

opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

Paragraph 98 states that to provide the social, recreational and cultural services the community needs, Planning policies and decisions should:

- Plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities and other local services to enhance sustainability of communities and residential environments;
- Take into account and support the delivery of local strategy and improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;
- Guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services;
- Ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit for the community;
- Ensure an integrated approach considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

Paragraph 103 states that access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities.

Paragraph 164 states that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:

- not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and
- approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas.

Paragraph 216 states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

### Mid Sussex District Plan

Mid Sussex District Council adopted the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 as a Development Plan Document and its meeting on 28th March 2018. It replaces the Mid Sussex District Local Plan 2004.

Policy DP1 relates to sustainable economic development. It states that the number of total additional jobs required within the district over the planned period is estimated to be an average of 543 jobs per year. This would be achieved by:

- Encourage high quality development of land and premises to meet the needs of the 21st Century businesses;
- Supporting existing businesses and allowing them room to expand.

In addition, effective use of employment land and premises will be made by permitting appropriate intensification, conversion, redevelopment and/or extension for employment uses provided it is in accordance with other policies in the plan.

Policy DP12 relates to the protection and enhancement of the countryside. It states that the countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, provided it maintained or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the district, and:

- it is necessary that the purposes of agriculture; or
- it is supported by a specific policy referenced elsewhere in the plan.

Policy DP14 relates to sustainable rural development and the rural economy. It states that provided it is not in conflict with Policy DP12, new small scale economic developments, including tourism related developments, within the countryside will be permitted providing:

- to support sustainable growth, vitality of the rural economy; and;
- where possible utilises previously developed sites.

Policy DP16 relates to the High Weald area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It states that development will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan. This is continued in Policy DP17 which relates to the Ashdown Forest SPA. This states that within a 7 kilometre zone of influence around the SPA, residential development leading to a net increase in dwellings will be required to contribute to mitigation.

Policy DP19 relates to sustainable tourism and states that tourism related development in the countryside including extensions to existing facilities, visitor accommodation and the re-use of rural buildings will be permitted provided that:

- It supports the sustainable growth of the rural economy: and
- Maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the district.

Policy DP19 relates to sustainable tourism. It states that tourism related development in the countryside, including extensions to existing facilities, visitor accommodation and the re-use of rural buildings will be permitted provided:

- it supports the sustainable growth of the rural economy; and
- maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, in accordance with Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside.

Policy DP25 relates to community facilities and local services. It states that the provisional improvement of community facilities and local services that contributed to creating sustainable communities will be supported.

Policy DP26 relates to character and design and states that all development and surrounding spaces, including the extensions to existing buildings, will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages all being sensitive to the countryside. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that the development:

- Is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping green space;
- Creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;
- Protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;
- Positively addresses sustainability considerations and the layout and the bidding design;
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development.

Policy DP34 relates to Listed Buildings and other heritage assets. It states that development that retains buildings which are not listed but are of architectural or historical merit, which make a significant and positive contribution to the street scene will be permitted in preference to demolition and redevelopment. The Council will seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so they can be enjoyed by the contribution to the character and quality of the life the district.

## MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

### Previous Pre-Application Advice

Pre-application advice was sought from Mid Sussex District Council via the Planning Officer and the Conservation Officer.

The Planning Officer's conclusion was that while the additional usage of the building is unlikely to be contentious, the scale and bulk of the proposed extension would be likely to be harmful to the character of this non designated heritage asset, with wider impacts from across the front garden area. This will need a significant reduction in order to be deemed acceptable, and consideration will need to be given to minimise a loss of existing trees within this area, to avoid an adverse impact on the wider landscape from nearby views.

The Conservation Officer provided additional comments separate to the Planning Officer and provided the following comment:

*"Having discussed the proposal with the architect I now have a better understanding of the thinking behind the approach to the design of the extension and of the quality of finish which is anticipated. Subject to detail I now consider that this contemporary interpretation of the arts and crafts style could be supported in principle. However, notwithstanding having a better understanding appreciation of the topography of the site and existing screening as a result of the site meeting, I remain concerned about the scale and bulk of the proposal which I consider will detract from the original building, in particular views from the garden setting to the south."*

Following this initial advice, a fresh Pre-Application Enquiry was submitted with significantly revised proposals. The Planning Officer stated:

*"Extension to Wickenden Manor*

*The council's Conservation Officer has stated:*

*The current pre-application enquiry follows a previous proposal for substantial extensions which was considered to detract from Wickenden Manor, a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA), in terms of scale and bulk.*

*The height and bulk of the proposal has been significantly reduced and I would now consider, although the extensions remain of a substantial scale, that given the non-designated status of the asset an objection on these grounds could no longer be sustained. The submitted photomontages demonstrate that the extensions will be largely screened in key views from the gardens to the south of the house. As per my previous comments I have*

*no objection in principle to the contemporary interpretation of Arts and Crafts architecture as a design approach, subject to detail.*

#### *Extension and change of use of stables*

*Neither Emily nor I are familiar with this group of buildings, and hence it is difficult to comment without the benefit of a site visit. If these buildings are of similar interest to the house, they may be regarded as forming part of the NDHA, or as NDHAs in their own right. Alternatively the impact of proposals on structures not worthy of this consideration may be assessed in terms of the impact on the setting of the Manor.*

*Subject to the extensions being deemed acceptable and retaining the rural quality of the buildings, then the change of use would be an appropriate one in connection with the overall use of the institution as a spiritual retreat.*

#### *Erection of conservatory to Lodge*

*Detailed advice on the scale of this extension, as well as the appropriateness of the siting, would only be possible following a site visit. Again, subject to this being deemed acceptable in design terms, it would be appropriate in principle to support the use of the main building.*

#### *New Hard Surface Basketball & Tennis Court*

*Although neither Emily nor I are familiar with the siting of the existing tennis court, the positioning of the new court should be appropriate, given the screening around – although I am not sure whether any trees require removal to avoid leaf drop onto the court or to facilitate the build itself. Care should be taken in this sensitive AONB landscape to ensure that the surfacing is not overly strident in colour and that it and the fencing (height and colour) blends in appropriately with its rural setting. However, these comments are subject to change following a site visit.*

#### *Installation of solar panels within the Walled Garden*

*The council's Conservation Officer has stated:*

*With respect to this further information it appears that the existing kitchen garden is largely laid to grass and that provided the solar array was not visible from outside the enclosing walls it could therefore be installed without significant impact on the character of the setting of the house. This would be particularly the case if the associated plant is to be installed within an existing building.*

*This would however be subject to detail and to a site inspection when this becomes possible.*

*Subject to this caveat, ensuring that the visual impact to both the setting of the house and the character of the AONB is not harmed, then this proposal should comply with Policy DP40 of the District Plan.*

## CONCLUSION

*The council's Conservation Officer has stated:*

*In summary subject to detail I consider that the extensions to the house are in their reduced form acceptable in principle in terms of the impact on the NDHA, which would meet the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34 and paragraph 197 of the NPPF.*

*The impact of proposals on the grounds of the house and buildings within it will require assessment with the benefit of a site visit at a later date."*

### Netherhall Education Association

*"NEA purchased Wickenden Manor in 1964. It has operated it continuously since then as a retreat and conference centre. The centre is operated by a small team of full and part time staff, who are in charge of administering the centre on a day to day basis. The fact that there has been a residential presence at the manor since NEA took it over has allowed us to forge strong and positive relations with our neighbours, who appreciate the work our staff do and the quiet, unassuming way in which they go about it: there is no noisy machinery or vehicles being used, or clogging up the country lanes leading up to the house. Our staff are very proud of their job and treat the place as their home.*

*This explains why the building and gardens have been scrupulously maintained to ensure that they are in good working order and presentable whilst at the same time keeping the costs of doing so within reason.*

*With the project to which this application relates we wanted to meet two principal and related objectives:*

- improve the working and living facilities for our staff, and increase the number of bedrooms.*
- improve the living facilities for our guests, ensuring disabled access (at present very limited) throughout the buildings.*

*There is a great need to upgrade the sleeping accommodation throughout, turning all rooms into single, en-suite rooms both in the staff and residents' areas. Upgrading the kitchen and laundry areas is also very much needed to generate better and more efficiently working spaces.*

*Additionally, but secondary to these two main objectives, we wanted to restore the barn area by the cottage at the end of the garden and convert it into a youth facility to accommodate young people to come for camps, environmental weekends, etc.*

*The end result will be that Wickenden Manor will be a better place to work in and to retreat to, and able to be self-sufficient economically. This last point will also be achieved with our plans to source cheaper and greener sources to supply the building energy needs: solar panels will be installed, as well as air source heat pumps."*

### Planning History

DM/20/4179

Three Storey extension to Wickenden Manor to provide further accommodation, meeting rooms and kitchen. Extension and change of use of stables to create further accommodation. Erection of conservatory to Lodge. New hard surface basketball and tennis court. Installation of solar panel arrays within the walled garden (Amended plans received 22 March 2021)

Approved – 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021

*“The applicant's Supporting Statement makes the following points:*

*'NEA purchased Wickenden Manor in 1964. It has operated it continuously since then as a retreat and conference centre. The centre is operated by a small team of full and part time staff, who are in charge of administering the centre on a day to day basis. The fact that there has been a residential presence at the manor since NEA took it over has allowed us to forge strong and positive relations with our neighbours, who appreciate the work our staff do and the quiet, unassuming way in which they go about it: there is no noisy machinery or vehicles being used, or clogging up the country lanes leading up to the house. Our staff are very proud of their job and treat the place as their home.*

*This explains why the building and gardens have been scrupulously maintained to ensure that they are in good working order and presentable whilst at the same time keeping the costs of doing so within reason.*

*With the project to which this application relates we wanted to meet two principal and related objectives:*

- 1. improve the working and living facilities for our staff, and increase the number of bedrooms.*
- 2. improve the living facilities for our guests, ensuring disabled access (at present very limited) throughout the buildings.*

*There is a great need to upgrade the sleeping accommodation throughout, turning all rooms into single, en-suite rooms both in the staff and residents' areas. Upgrading the kitchen and laundry areas is also very much needed to generate better and more efficiently working spaces.*

*Additionally, but secondary to these two main objectives, we wanted to restore the barn area by the cottage at the end of the garden and convert it into a youth facility to accommodate young people to come for camps, environmental weekends, etc.*

*The end result will be that Wickenden Manor will be a better place to work in and to retreat to, and able to be self-sufficient economically. This last point will also be achieved with our plans to source cheaper and greener sources to supply the building energy needs: solar panels will be installed, as well as geothermal heat exchangers.'*

*On this basis, it is considered that Policies DP19 and DP25 would be met by this proposal and hence Policy DP12 would also be met.*

*The application is also accompanied by an Advice Note on Landscape and Visual Issues with photographic analysis and computer generated/perspective view images. The Report recommends that the existing tree belts are retained (which they are) and that the main area that can accommodate expansion is to the immediate west of the main manor house (which is where the proposed extension will be sited). It makes further recommendations to strengthen the tree belt to the southern boundary towards the west, using trees and shrubs, including a management plan to achieve site landscape objectives.*

*The council's Conservation Officer has been involved in design negotiations at pre-application stage and during the course of this application, particularly in relation to the main manor house and the Lodge, as a result of the main building being of value locally, although is not statutorily listed.*

*The revised plans resulted in a side extension, still of some scale, but now more subservient to the main building, particularly as a result of the drop in height of the main ridge immediately to the west of the existing roof.*

*The negotiations also resulted in a smaller conservatory to the Lodge building, which previously was seen as quite imposing in its scale, particularly as it was visible through the vegetation to the public highway.*

*The Stables will result in a replacement of corrugated insulated panels and will be an improvement on the existing run-down group of buildings. It is considered that the proposal is sensitively designed, and details of the facing materials can be secured by condition, in particular to take account of the High Weald Colour Study.*

*The council's Conservation Officer is satisfied that the proposals will be acceptable subject to conditions.*

*No objection is similarly raised by the High Weald AONB Unit. Therefore, subject to conditions, it is considered that the proposal is appropriate in design and sensitive to the AONB landscape, and therefore would comply with the above policies, design guide principles and the NPPF."*

Whilst amended plans were submitted in 2024, suitable pre-commencement conditions were subsequently discharged and a lawful commencement of the planning permissions took place – confirmed by way of a Certificate of Lawfulness.

Essentially, therefore, a larger scheme could be built out in its entirety, with this application seeking permission for a reduced scheme.

## PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

### Proposals

The Planning Policy section sets the context of the site and provides the basis for the proposals. The proposals are five fold:

- Extension to Wickenden Manor to provide further accommodation, meeting rooms and kitchen;
- Erection of extension to Lodge;
- Extension and change of use of stables to create further accommodation for young people and their activities;
- New Hard Surface Tennis Court
- Installation of solar panels within the Walled Garden.

The following will therefore consider these proposals against the Planning Policy backdrop.

### Principle

The first Pre-Application Advice confirmed the principle of extending Wickenden Manor to provide further accommodation and associated services, subject to an appropriate scale, mass and design. The same can be said for the second Pre-Application Enquiry which also built on this support whilst also making substantial amendments to the design, referenced later in this Statement, which resulted in support by the Conservation Officer.

Planning permission was subsequently approved, with amended plans submitted in 2024.

The approved 2024 **north elevation** is shown below.



As shown in the submitted drawing package, the revised **north elevation** would be as follows:



The approved 2024 **south elevation** is shown below.



As shown in the submitted drawing package, the revised **south elevation** would be as follows:



The principle of extending the Manor House is considered acceptable, with planning permission secured and commenced. This submission seeks an alternative arrangement to the extension to the Manor House, but continues the design approach taken since 2020.

The extension seeks to retain the character of the Manor House, with the proposed extension not seeking to compete the grandeur and character of the building. The extension is clearly read as an extension, instead of pretending to have been there all along.

The proposals continue to represent high quality design, respecting the existing building(s) and the rural setting.

Next, attention turns to the extension of the Lodge by way of a an extension.

The design approach has been to do minimal works, and therefore the extension is a light weight timber frame addition to the east facing elevation. This provides additional internal/external meeting/teaching space, in accordance with the existing accommodation provided.

As set out in the Pre-Application Advice, the principle of the extension was accepted, subject to an appropriate design.

These were subsequently approved in 2021. These submitted proposals seek minor amendments to that already approved but retain the overall high quality design approach.

In addition to the above, the proposals include an extension and change of use to the existing stables to provide accommodation for young people. The Pre-Application Advice did not suggest an in-principle objection, which saw the proposals approved in 2021.

These submitted proposals seek minor amendments to that already approved but retain the overall high quality design approach.

Policy DP19 states that tourism related development in the countryside, including extensions to existing facilities, visitor accommodation and the re-use of rural buildings will be permitted provided:

- it supports the sustainable growth of the rural economy; and
- maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, in accordance with Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside.

The proposals achieve both of these aims and therefore should remain acceptable in principle.

In addition to providing additional accommodation and facilities directly related to the functions at Wickenden Manor, the proposals also include an additional hardcourt for sport, located adjacent to the existing tennis court, and a solar array within the confines of the Walled Garden.

The position and design of the new court ensures that it has no impact on the wider area and does not cause any harm.

The new solar array has been purposely designed and positioned to provide energy to the whole site.

These remain as approved in 2021, with that permission commenced.

The NPPF states that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:

- not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and
- approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas.

The delivery of a solar array, should therefore continue to be considered acceptable in principle subject to its impact on the wider landscape.

The general approach to the development remains as approved in 2021 and through amendments in 2024. These permissions have been implemented.

This submission suggests very minor amendments to the vast majority of that approved/implemented, with the main change focussing on the extension to the Manor House.

It therefore considered that the principle of development should remain acceptable.

### Design

It is under design where significant work has been focussed following the earlier approvals, noting that some changes were needed to the scheme which would be beyond the scope of a Section 73 Application.

The application is supported by a detailed Design and Access Statement which sets out the design narrative in more detail. However, it is important to recognise that the design has remained consistent and supported by the Conservation Officer in both Pre-Application Enquiries and in supporting the approvals in 2021 and 2024.

The inspiration for the Manor House extension continues to stem from its suggested historical connections and design heritage. As set out in the Design and Access Statement whilst it has not been possible to ascertain who the original architect of Wickenden Manor was, it is clear that he was very close to Sir Edwin Lutyens, and may have even worked in his office.

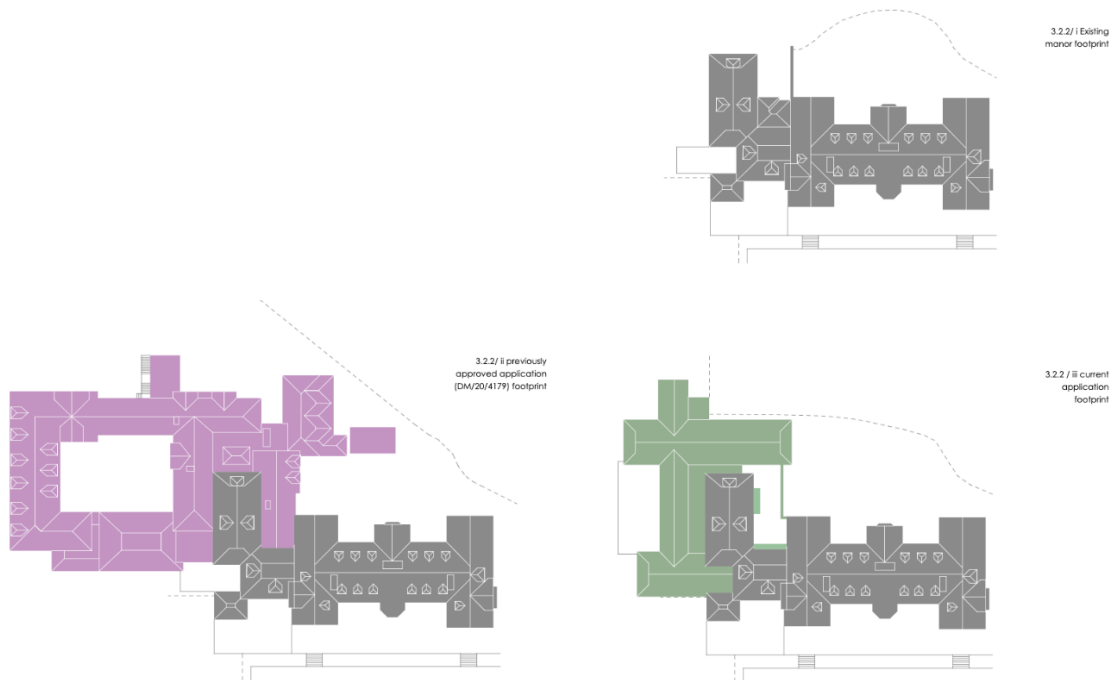
The similarities in the facades of Wickenden Manor and Little Thakeham are clear to the see. In addition, the treatment of the stone and detailing of the windows of Wickenden Manor and Castle Drogo are equally similar.

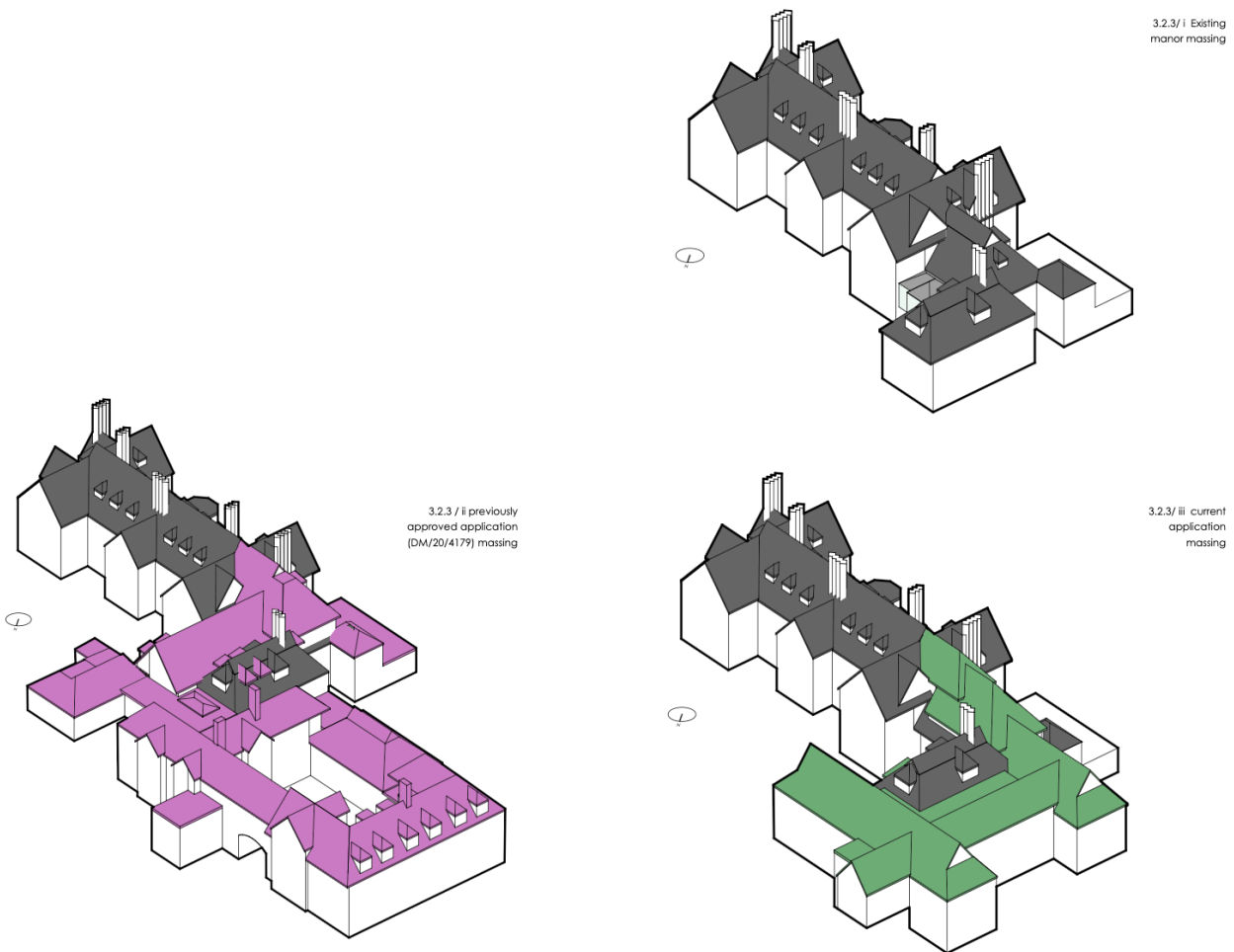
In Little Thakeham, Lutyens places all the ancillary spaces in a building physically attached to the main building and gives it the appearance of a farmhouse and farm buildings in brick.

Given this, it is considered that the treatment we have given to the extension is the correct one - having been supported by the Conservation Officer in the past.

The Design and Access Statement is an incredibly helpful document in setting out the changes between the approval and that submitted – in particular a significant reduction of the bulk and mass of the extension.

An extract from the Design and Access Statement is shown below:





Turning to the lodge, the external changes are minimal and focus on the introduction of an external extension. The intention is to introduce a a lightweight timber frame extension, which has minimal structural impact on the existing building.

The changes to the accompanying stables have also been carefully considered in design terms. The design approach has been to do the very minimum externally (removing the corrugated asbestos cement roofs and cladding and replacing it with corrugated insulated panels (the type used nowadays in farm buildings but integral with insulation) and leave the stable buildings intact to retain their character. The differences between that approved/implemented and the submitted version are incredibly minor in nature.

The proposal comprises the following:

**Sleeping:** Two bedrooms with bathrooms for leaders and five dormitories for 10 people.

**Washing:** There are five showers (each with a changing area), five WC's and three wash basins, all arranged so that they can be used by any of the dormitories. In addition, there is an accessible shower and WC.

Meeting: The big barn is converted into a Lounge with a study area on a raised level, following the contours of the site, that can be used as dining area or as study area. The drawings show the various arrangements of furniture for different uses.

Given the entire approach of minimal external alterations, the stables retain their authentic former agricultural appearance. The differences between that approved/implemented and the submitted version are incredibly minor in nature.

The design of the hard court is determined by its eventual use. The differences between that approved/implemented and the submitted version are incredibly minor in nature.

However, it is important to note that its location has been specifically chosen to benefit from the surrounding trees and vegetation to ensure that there are no wider landscape impacts.

Lastly, the solar array proposed for the Walled Garden area of the site is also determined by its function. However, that does not mean that it hasn't taken into consideration its context and position.

The applicant has purposely positioned the solar array within the Walled Garden of Wickenden Manor, with the scale lower than that of the existing walls to ensure that the solar panels cannot be seen in the wider landscape or anywhere on-site.

The intention is to also use an existing building within the Walled Garden as the location for the associated plant, which in turn results in a form of development aimed at responding positively to its setting. The image below is taken from the accompanying Design and Access Statement which gives an indicative view of the solar array.



The design of the proposals therefore remain consistent with that already approved, with the scale and mass of the extension to the Manor House greatly reduced.

It is therefore considered that the design remains acceptable.

### Flood Risk & Drainage

The application has been submitted accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment by Meridian Civil Engineering Consultancy.

The purpose of the assessment was to assess any flood risk to the proposed development, whether the proposals give risk to flooding elsewhere.

The proposed development is located within Flood Zone 1. The nearest extent of Flood Zone 2 to the site is located approximately 2.2km north of the site at its closest proximity. The site is located at the upstream limit of its catchment, where topographic levels vary between 121mAOD and 166mAOD. Topographic levels fall to a small drainage ditch at the south of the site that later becomes a tributary to the Cockhaise Brook. The closest EA Main River to the site is the River Medway, located approximately 2.6km north.

In the unlikely event that flooding would occur on site, due to the steep topography of the site, flows will likely be conveyed southwards towards the drain at the southern boundary of the site. It is recommended that should the capacity of the drain become exceeded, that site users at the converted (and extended) stables seek refuge at Wickenden Manor which is located further north at the site at higher topographic levels.

However, as already established, with the site falling within Flood Zone 1, the likelihood of a flooding event remains very unlikely.

The application has been submitted accompanied by a Drainage Strategy by TZG Partnership.

In terms of existing foul drainage, a digester type sewerage system was installed circa 25years ago and updated not so long ago. Exact timeframes are uncertain but there may be capacity for the minor increase in site usage.

The Drainage Strategy demonstrates that the site can be drained appropriately with the use of SUDS, with all storm water (including 1 in 100 year event + 40% climate change) stored below ground.

The proposals continue to be policy compliant, as concluded in 2021.

Therefore, in terms of flood risk and drainage, the scheme remains acceptable and compliant with both national and local plan policy.

### Ecology

The application has been submitted accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report, Preliminary Roost Assessment Report, Bat Emergence and Re-entry Surveys, Great Crested Newt eDNA Sampling Report, Biodiversity Net Gain Report and associated Biodiversity Net Gain Metric Report provided for by ArbTech.

The purpose of these report was to inform the design process for the proposal, record the ecological baseline and identify key ecological features within and around the proposal site.

There are no internationally, nationally or locally important wildlife sites within the 1km desk study search area, but there is one Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The survey area lies within the Impact Risk Zone of the Ashdown Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA).

There are records of a range of protected or notable species in the locality, including amphibians, birds, invertebrates, terrestrial mammals, flowering plants and terrestrial reptiles, together with four priority or notable habitats: Traditional Orchard, Deciduous Woodland, Ghyll Woodland and Ancient Woodland.

The proposed developments, as currently presented, would result in small-scale losses of some of the less valuable habitats within the survey area, including buildings, amenity grassland and small areas of scrub and tall ruderal, which are considered to be of site level importance only. However, they provide habitats suitable for a number of protected species (e.g. amphibians, nesting birds, roosting bats and reptiles).

A Great Crested Newt Survey was also undertaken, showing that the development can be suitably mitigated to ensure no harm to protected species.

Given the findings of the PEA/PRA, it was recommended that the following additional surveys are undertaken:

- Presence / absence surveys for roosting bats within the Manor House and Lodge,
- Ground-level tree assessment for roosting bats within woodland and scattered trees, preferably during winter or spring, if tree removals are required.

These additional surveys were also undertaken, showing that the development can be suitably mitigated to ensure no harm to protected species.

Lastly, Biodiversity Net Gain, the baseline habitat value of the site is 35.95 units, comprising 10.28 woodland units, 0.09 bramble scrub units, 1.10 introduced shrub units, 4.72 other lowland acid grassland units and developed land: sealed surface (no value).

The post development habitat value of the site is 25.12 units, comprising the creation of the building extension, the loss of some modified grassland, some introduced shrub and the retention of all other habitats.

This results in a net change in biodiversity of -30.12%.

Given this, in order to be policy compliant, offsetting will be required, which can be secured by way of a planning condition.

### Transport

The application has been submitted accompanied by a Transport Statement provided for by Paul Basham Associates.

The purpose of the statement was to review the existing conditions and accessibility of the site, the development proposals, vehicular access, trip generation and the overall impact of the development from a highway's perspective.

Given the site's rural location and its nature as a remote retreat, the site is not particularly accessible through sustainable modes of transport and is not supported by rail, bus or pedestrian infrastructure.

However, the site is accessible through the local road network and has been in operation for many years.

The closest rail station to the site is located at Kingscote station (approximately 4km north of the site). It is noted that some visitors may choose to travel to the site from this station via taxi services.

The site is currently accessed from Chilling Street through the use of two separate vehicular access points. The main entrance is located on the south east corner of the site.

The main vehicle access is constructed to a good standard with a tarmac road leading into the site and to the Manor House. The access road is of suitable width to allow two vehicles to pass one another concurrently.

Visitors to the site can typically be split into three categories; students who visit the site and stay on the premises currently within the annex/lodge; school children who arrive on pre-arranged visits typically through mini-bus; and guests who stay in the Manor House.

The proposals will also support the educational facilities at the site and allow young people to utilise the facilities and grounds of Wickenden Manor for educational learning. Therefore, as part of the proposals the existing stables located to the southwest of the manor will be redeveloped to provide additional accommodation for students.

The proposed increase in vehicle trips is not considered to have a significant impact on the operation or safety of the local road network particularly considering that the existing site has operated for many years and no traffic incidents have occurred within the vicinity of the access points over the most recent five year period.

Sufficient vehicle parking is provided throughout the site on informal gravelled areas to cater for the existing demand on the site. It is noted that the areas dedicated for parking across the site currently have sufficient capacity to cater for the additional demand which will occur as a result of the development proposals.

As part of the proposals to redevelop the stables into student accommodation space will be added to accommodate a mini-bus which will be used to transport the students to and from the site.

Given the findings of the statement by Paul Basham Associates, the access remains safe to support the development proposals and the scheme delivers sufficient car parking to accommodate any increase in vehicles – as the 2021/2024 approvals which has been commenced.

### Landscape

The application has been submitted accompanied by a Hard and Soft Landscape Plan provided for by HW&Co.

The site forms part of a settled landscape rural in character that includes villages, farmsteads, building clusters and large individual houses. The land immediately surrounding the site includes both individual buildings and groups of buildings, as follows:

- A large private dwelling Dalingbridge Place with two semi-detached cottages and farm buildings that lie approximately 150m to the north of Chilling Street
- A cluster of farm buildings including a cottage lie due west of Wickenden Manor approximately 140m separated by open pasture field
- Wickenden Farm lies approximately 400m to the South West
- Balcombe Farm lies approximately 500m to the South East

Within the site there are two more dwellings currently used as part of the retreat along with a group of old barn buildings that were once part of the old pheasantry. There are a number of landscaped gardens including ponds, a tennis court and walled gardens separated by mature rhododendron shrubs and mature trees.

The Landscape Plan clearly demonstrates that the site can accommodate change and an extension to the Manor House as applied for. The other elements of the application are minor in nature and in locations which have no impact on the wider landscape due to the retention of important landscaping which gives the site its character.

This is consistent with DM/24/0363, which approved the previous Hard and Soft Landscaping Plan.

### Sustainability

It is with sustainability where the applicant is most proud of the proposals.

Whilst the main focus, naturally, has been on supporting the charity by improving and extending its buildings to meet the demands on their growing number of occupants, the charity is not immune or unaware of its responsibilities to ensure that development today is not to the detriment of future generations.

Therefore, alongside the extension proposals and increase in accommodation, the charity has also investigated significant resources in understanding the energy demand of the site as a whole and the opportunity for suitably located energy generating technologies.

It was discounted, at an early stage, for any solar panels to be erected directly on Wickenden Manor. However, in landscape terms, whilst normally ground level solar arrays would not be acceptable, the site benefits from an extensive walled garden which created an enclosed area separated from the remaining land holding which is more open in nature—apart from existing landscape features.

The application has been submitted accompanied by an Energy and Sustainability Statement provided for by Integration.

The purpose of the statement was to provide a detailed Solar PV Assessment.

The proposed installation comprises 35.4kw of ground-mounted solar PV panels.

The solar irradiation in the south of England is relatively high and readily supports the use of PV installations.

Given that the solar array will provide for all of the electricity demands of the site as a whole, it is considered that this sustainable credential should be well supported by the Local Planning Authority.

## PLANNING CONDITIONS

As confirmed within the Planning History section:

DM/24/0363

Discharge of condition 5 in relation to DM/20/4179.

Approved – 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024

DM/24/0382

Discharge of conditions 6 and 8 in relation to DM/20/4179.

Approved – 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024

DM/24/0439

Discharge of planning condition nos. 3, 4 and 7 relating to planning application DM/20/4179.

Approved – 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024

This application seeks to avoid the need to repeat the introduction of the above-mentioned pre-commencement conditions.

Condition 3 – Related to materials

Condition 4 – Related to detailed drawings

Condition 5 – Related to landscaping

Condition 6 – Related to drainage

Condition 7 – Related to site levels

Condition 8 – Related to the requirement for a Construction Management Plan

If additional information is required for these conditions, this can be requested.

## SUMMARY

The site consists of a large manor house set in large grounds, also containing two dwellings and other outbuildings. There are two separate accesses from Chilling Street to the east and north.

The proposals are five fold:

- Extension to Wickenden Manor to provide further accommodation, meeting rooms and kitchen;
- Erection of extension to Lodge;
- Extension and change of use of stables to create further accommodation for young people and their activities;
- New Hard Surface Tennis Court
- Installation of solar panels within the Walled Garden.

The proposals have been subject to two Pre-Application Enquiries, planning permission from 2021 and amended plans in 2024. A subsequent certificate of lawfulness application confirmed that the applications were implemented prior to expiry.

Therefore, the proposals as approved can continue to be implemented.

The submission relates, mainly, to an amended extension to the Manor House. As demonstrated within the Design and Access Statement, the proposed extension has been significantly reduced against that which has been approved/implemented.

The other elements of the proposals remain broadly the same as approved.

All of the supportive reports and statements confirm that the proposals do not result in any harm, whether this be to the landscape, drainage, trees, highway, or protected species.

The proposals therefore fully comply with national and local plan policy and should therefore be supported and approved planning permission.