

PLANNING STATEMENT

JULY 2026



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. 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. 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 – JULY 2026

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 – 21st 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 – 1st July 2024

DM/24/0363

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

Approved – 25th April 2024

DM/24/0382

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

Approved – 25th April 2024

DM/24/0439

Discharge of planning condition nos. 3, 4 and 7 relating to planning application DM/20/4179.
Approved – 13th June 2024

DM/24/2011

Confirmation that commencement of development has taken place pertaining to
DM/20/4179 / DM/24/0121.
Approved – 18th 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:

- its 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 extension 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.

Note : A further preapplication was submitted in July 2026 to revise the design of the extension to the Lodge. The scale and materiality of this extension were agreed in a pre-application meeting with Emily Wade in July 2026. Details of the pre-application report and supporting statements are included within the appendix.

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 – 21st 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;
- 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 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.

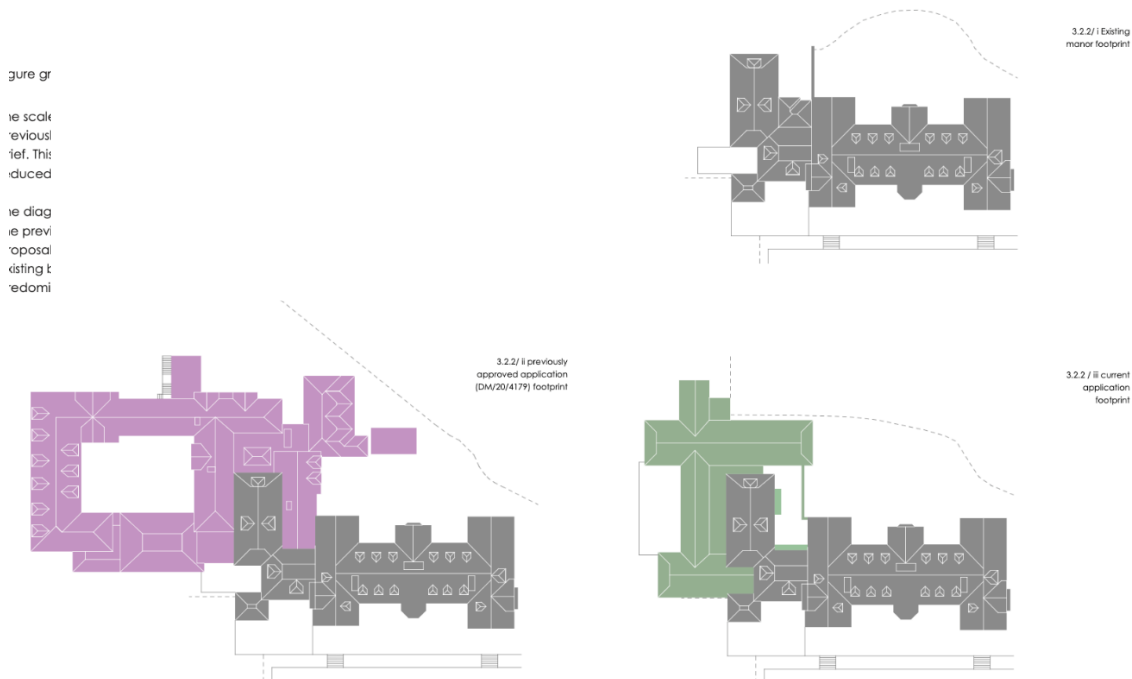
The similarities in the facades of Wickenden Manor and Little Thakeham are clear to the see. In addition, the treatment of the stone and detailing of the windows of Wickenden Manor and Castle Drogo are equally similar.

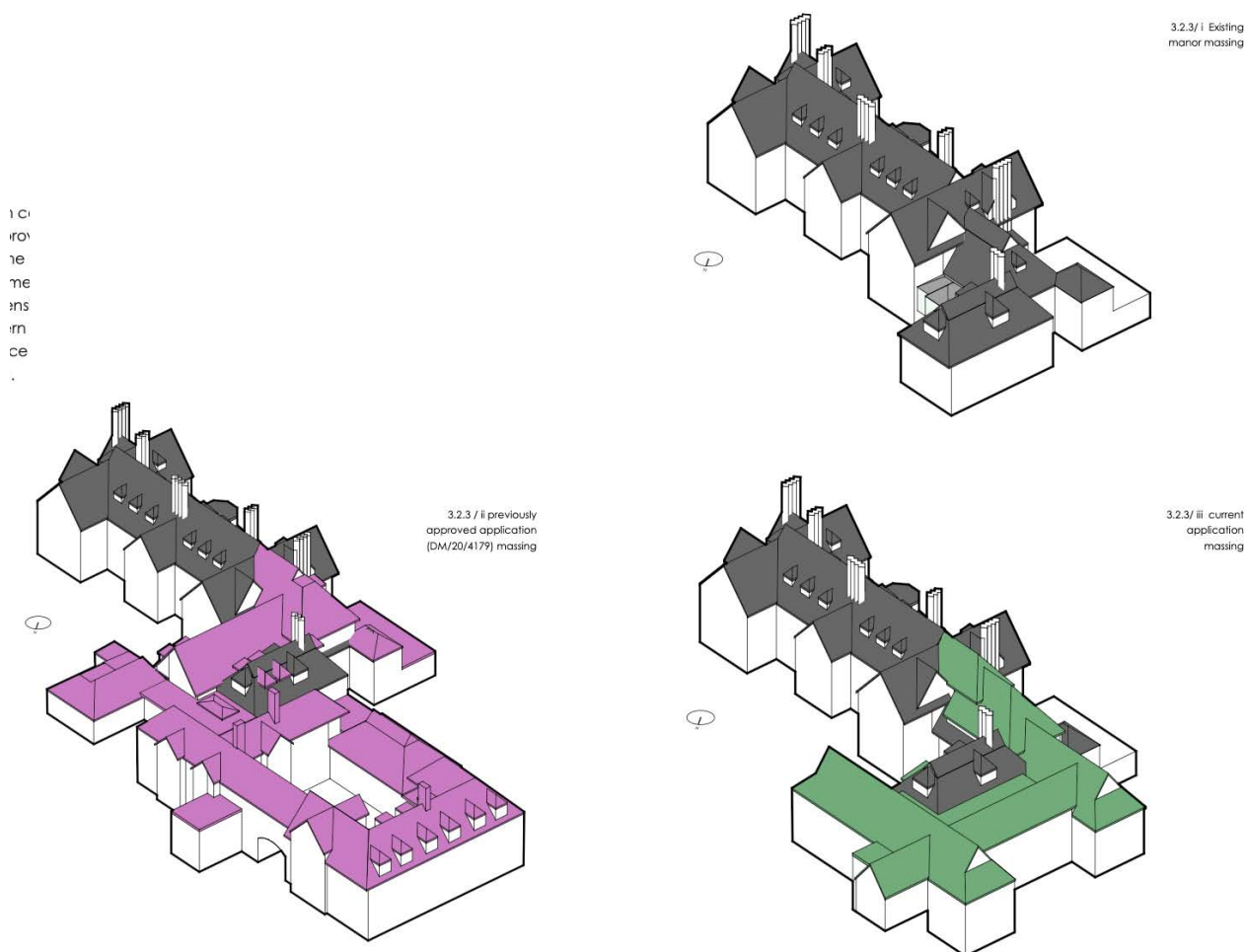
In Little Thakeham, Lutyens places all the ancillary spaces in a building physically attached to the main building and gives it the appearance of a farmhouse and farm buildings in brick.

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 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.

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 – 25th April 2024

DM/24/0382

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

Approved – 25th April 2024

DM/24/0439

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

Approved – 13th 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;
- 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.

APPENDIX 1

PRE-PLANNING APPLICATION

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

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 - Windows & External Insulation
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- 7.0 Public Benefits**
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A-Zero Architects

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tel. 020 7701 2664

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared in support of a pre-application enquiry relating to the proposed alterations and extension to the Lodge Building at Wickenden Manor. The Lodge building is designed to accommodate guests who stay between three days and three weeks, during which time they will have a private ensuite room, and use the central social space for dining and group activities.

There have been several iterations of design for the lodge and commentary received.

	Date	Reference	Status
Design 1	July 2021	DM/20/4179	Granted
Design 2	August 2025	DM/25/2716	Pending decision
Design 3	June 2026	Pre-application	Preapplication advise received
Design 4	July 2026	Pre-application	responds to conservation comments

Whilst we fully appreciate that earlier discussions have taken place, those discussions did not take place with the current design team and, unfortunately, the previous architect has since passed away. As a result, we do not have the benefit of the context surrounding those discussions and therefore consider it important that the design principles and rationale are revisited to ensure a shared understanding moving forward.

The purpose of this report is not to suggest that the proposal is without heritage impact. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate that the design has evolved through successive iterations to minimise that impact whilst addressing operational, environmental and viability constraints that have become apparent since the original planning permission was granted.

Two additional statements are appended to this pre-application.

- Statement from Jack Valero of Netherhall Educational Association (applicant)
- Statement from Mike Spence of Integration Engineers (Consulting Engineer)

2.0 UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LODGE

Before considering the impact of the proposed extension, it is important to understand the significance of the Lodge and the elements which contribute most strongly to its heritage value.

The Lodge forms part of the wider Wickenden Manor estate and derives much of its significance from its relationship with the Manor House, its contribution to the historic approach to the estate, and its role in illustrating the historic functioning of the wider property. Architecturally, the building is characterised by its rendered elevations, clay tiled hipped roofs with dormers, deep projecting eaves and domestic Arts and Crafts detailing.

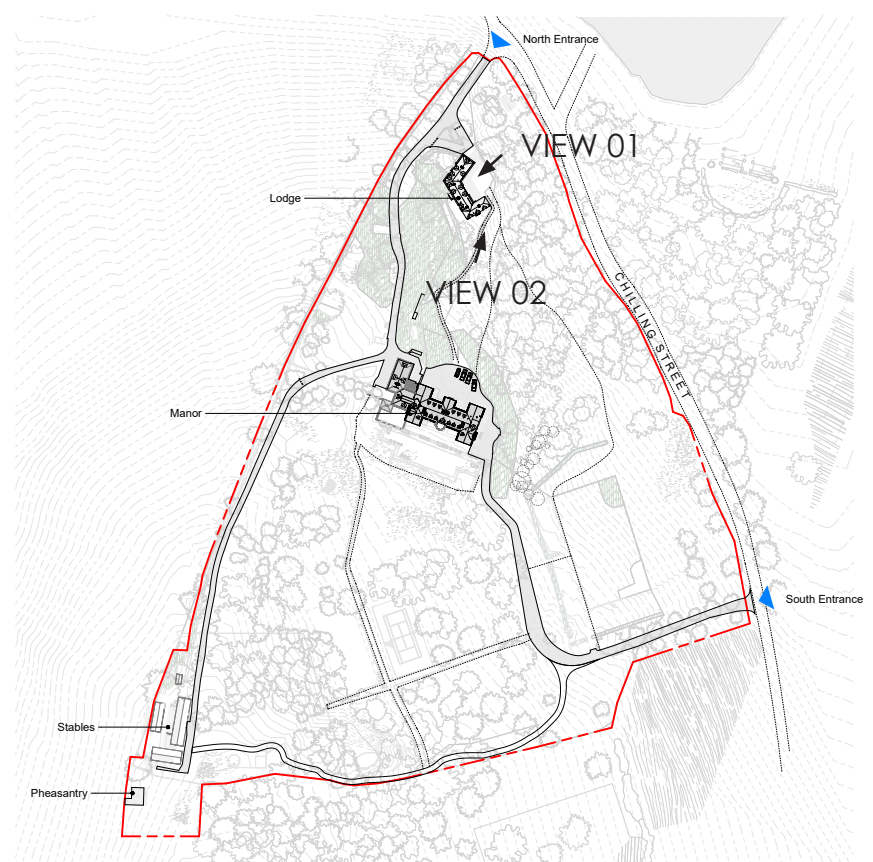
Whilst the current courtyard arrangement contributes to the building's character, it is not considered to represent the principal significance of the asset. Examination of the building fabric indicates that the present U-shaped arrangement is itself the result of successive phases of development, rather than the original form of the building. The courtyard therefore reflects the historical evolution of the Lodge rather than a singular designed composition.



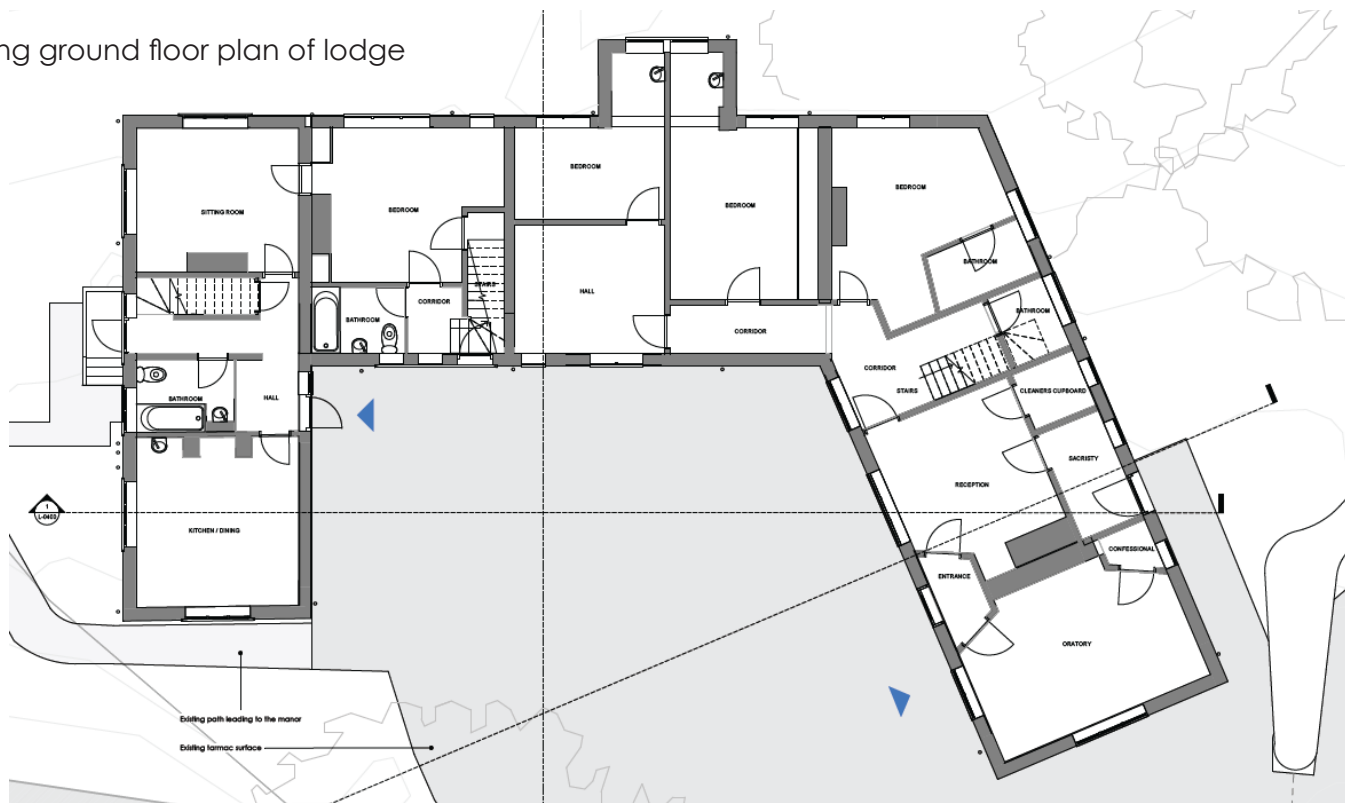
VIEW 3



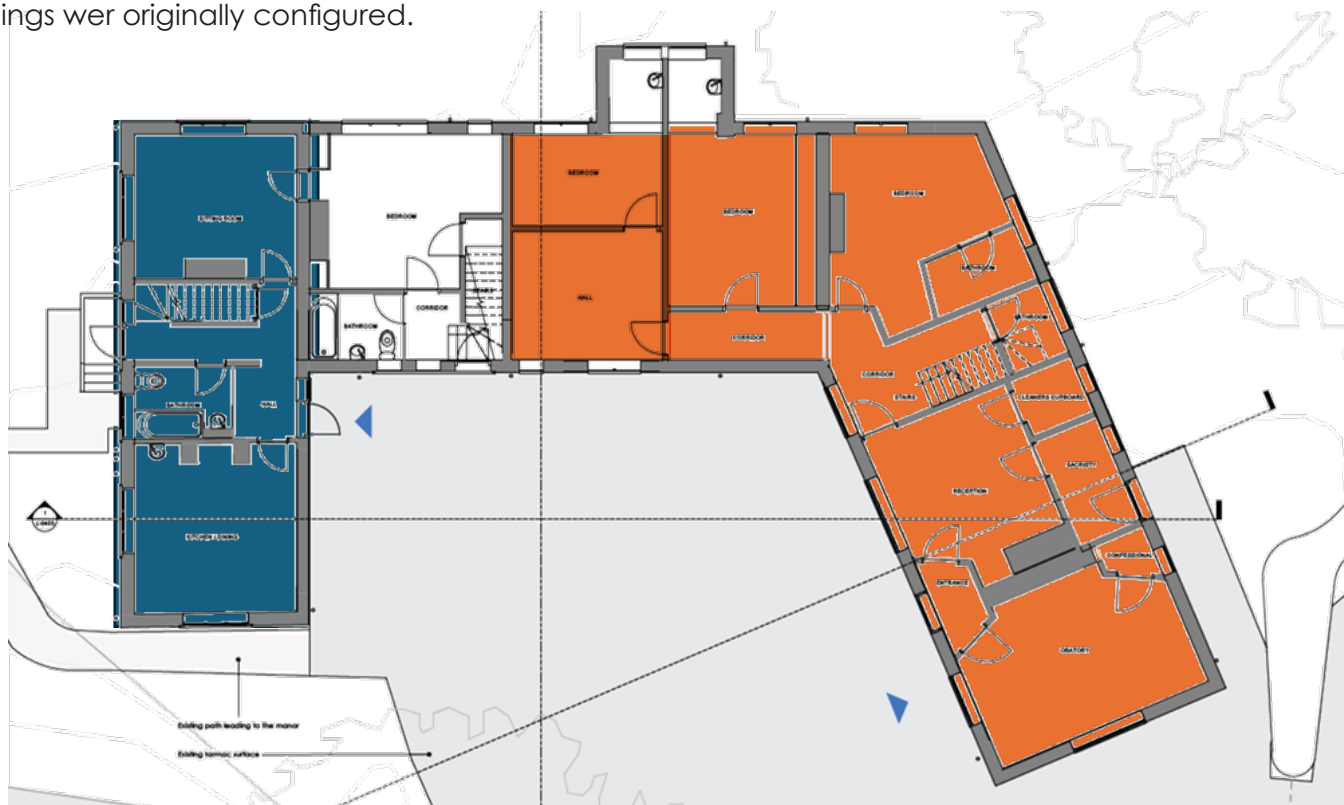
VIEW 2



Existing ground floor plan of lodge



Colour coding of plan showing how the two buildings were originally configured.



ARIAL VIEW OF LODGE

3.0 DESIGN EVOLUTION

Design 1 – DM/20/4179 approved 2021

The approved design comprises a light weight glazed conservatory attached to the east facing elevation of the lodge building. This is designed to be removable so as to minimise the impact on the existing building.

The existing building is a U-shaped two story building with clay tiled hipped roofs and dormers, leaded windows and rendered elevation.

Why the existing conservatory design is not feasible.

There are two key issues with the existing conservatory design approved under reference DM/20/4179

Environmental problems

Conservatories are problematic spaces because they are uncomfortable for the occupants, overheating in summer, and suffering excessive heat loss during winter. This results in significantly increased energy consumption for mechanical cooling in summer and heating in winter. These shortcomings are problematic for two reasons.

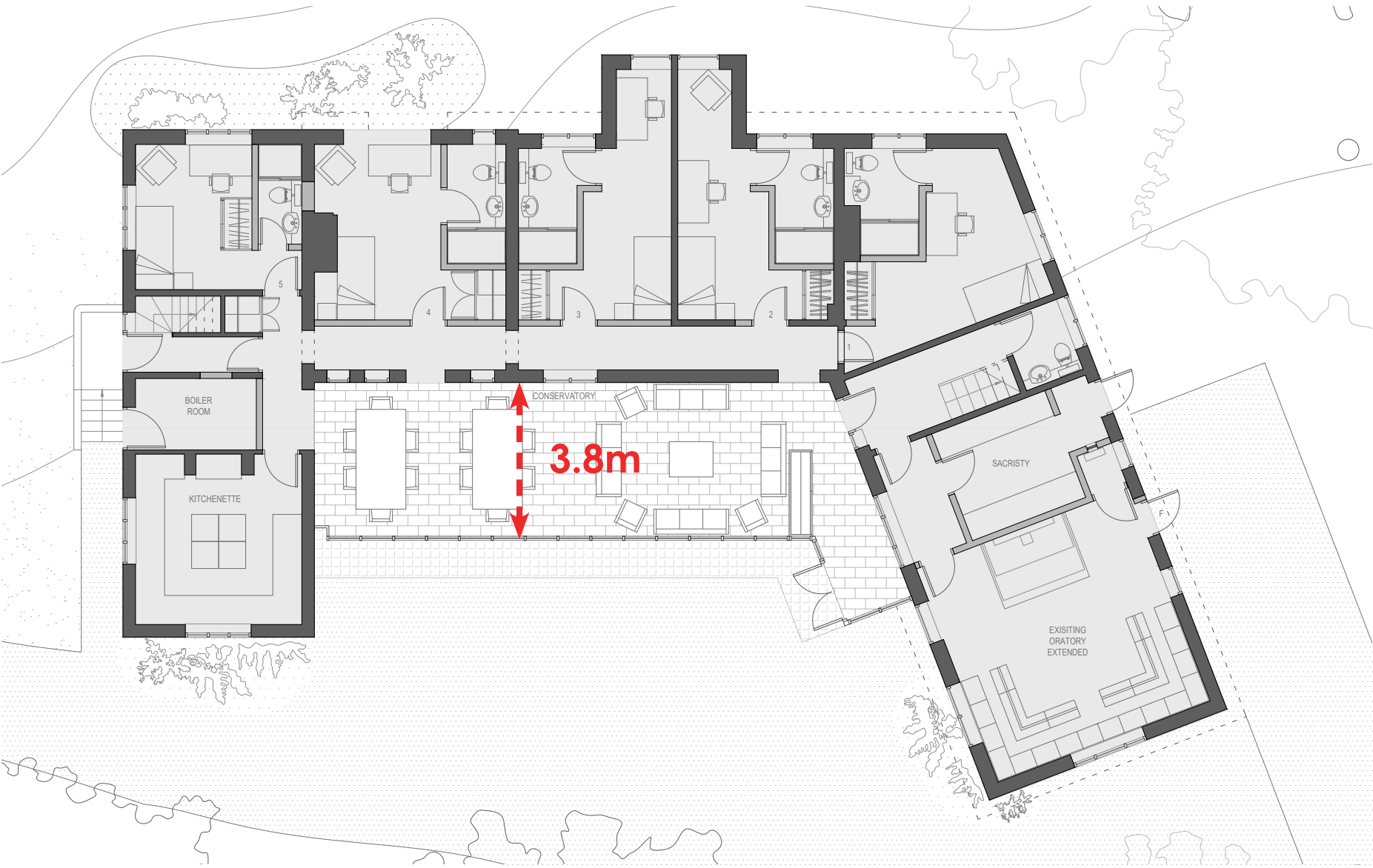
- The conservatory is the main social space for the thirteen single bedrooms. All dining and social activities will take place during this space with all thirteen occupants participating. In winter, to achieve comfortable environment for the occupants, mechanical heating will be required to offset the high heat loss of the glazed envelope. In summer, a combination of blinds and mechanical cooling will be required to offset solar gains.
- This energy intensive approach is particularly problematic in Wickenden Manor given the limit of electrical power available on the site, which must serve the extended manor building, the lodge building and the stables. In order to work within this limit, all buildings have been designed for low energy operation. A conservatory which has a high energy demand is not feasible.

Please refer to the statement prepared by Integration Engineers which sets out the issues in more depth.

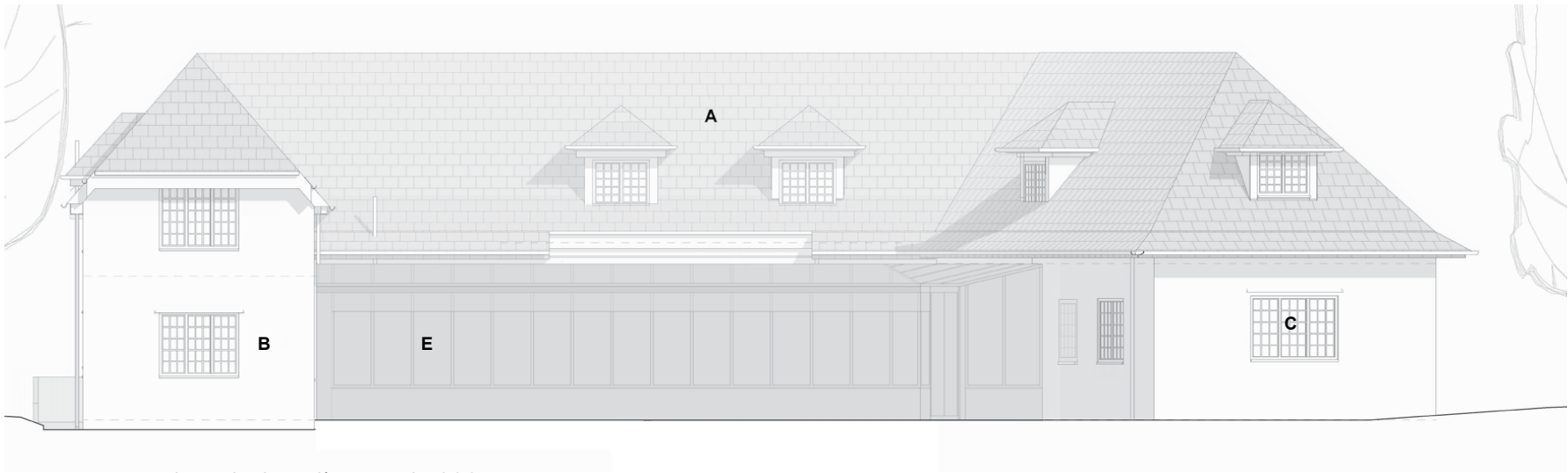
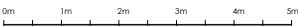
Spatial problems

The social space for the lodge needs to be sufficiently sized for the 13 occupants who use the Lodge, and rely on this central space for all dining, and group activities throughout their stay. The conservatory is 50m² and has an internal width of 3.8m. This size is insufficient to accommodate both dining and seating, and does not allow for adequate circulation for fire egress or for accessibility which are requirements for Building Control.

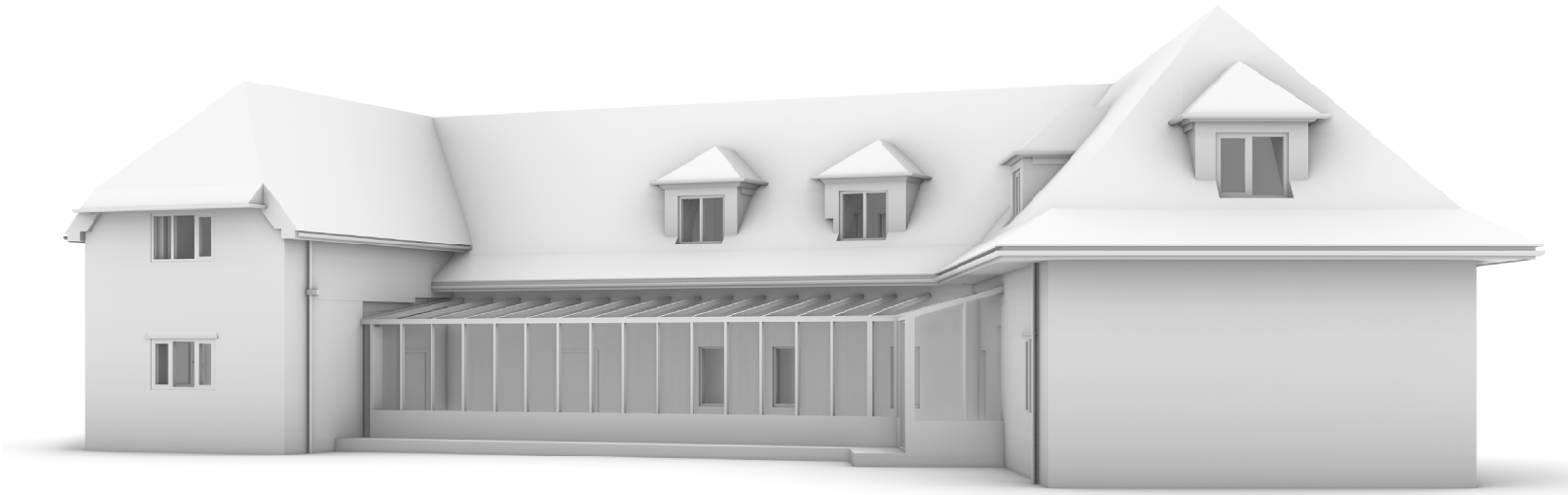
The approved conservatory design is therefore no longer considered capable of meeting the operational and environmental requirements of the Lodge.



Proposed GF plan - July 2021



Proposed east elevation - July 2021



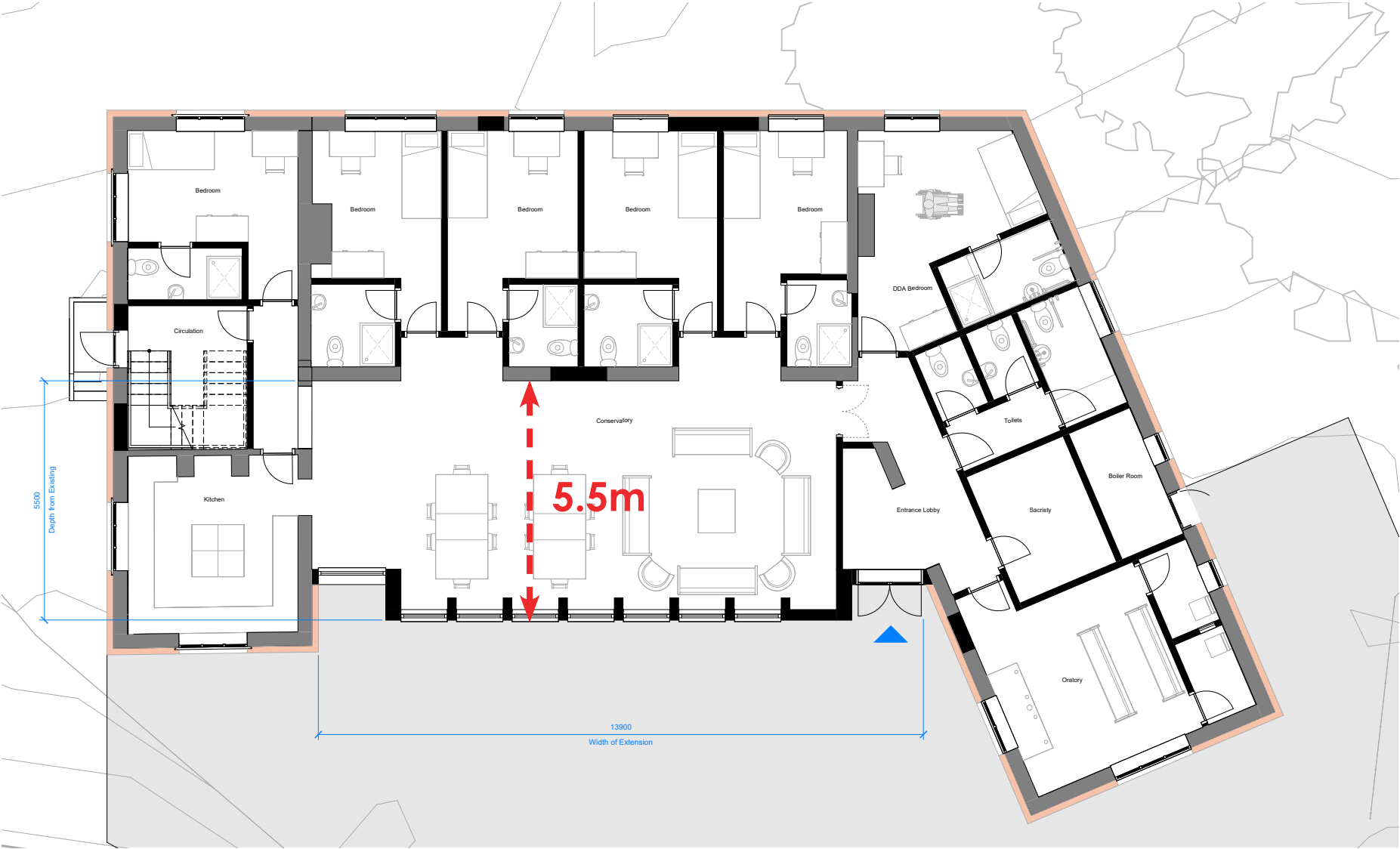
Design 2 – August 2025 (application DM/25/2716)

The extension is offset 5.5m from the face of the existing lodge, with an upward sloping mono-pitch roof. The extension is a brick construction with east facing windows and a linear rooflight.

Commentary from the conservation officer received on 29th May stated :

- The proposed brick-built infill extension is considered overscaled, unduly prominent and unsympathetic, failing to preserve the Lodge's characteristic U-shaped form.
- The revised extension is viewed as a retrograde step from the previously approved lightweight glazed design and should be reconsidered.
- Replacement of the existing uPVC windows with timber is supported in principle, but the loss of the leaded glazing pattern is considered harmful to the building's character.
- Further justification and technical information are requested for the proposed external insulation to demonstrate that it will not adversely affect the Lodge's characteristic deep eaves and architectural detailing.

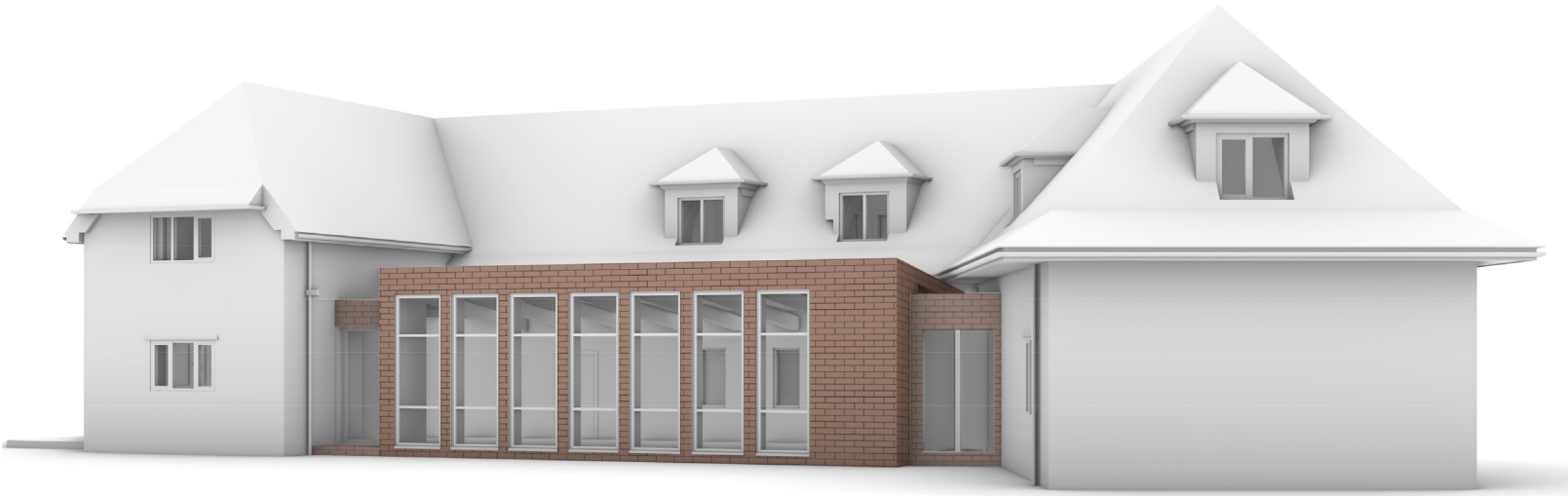
Design 2 – August 2025 (application DM/25/2716)



Proposed GF plan - August 2025



Proposed east elevation - August 2025



Design 3 – June 2026 preapplication

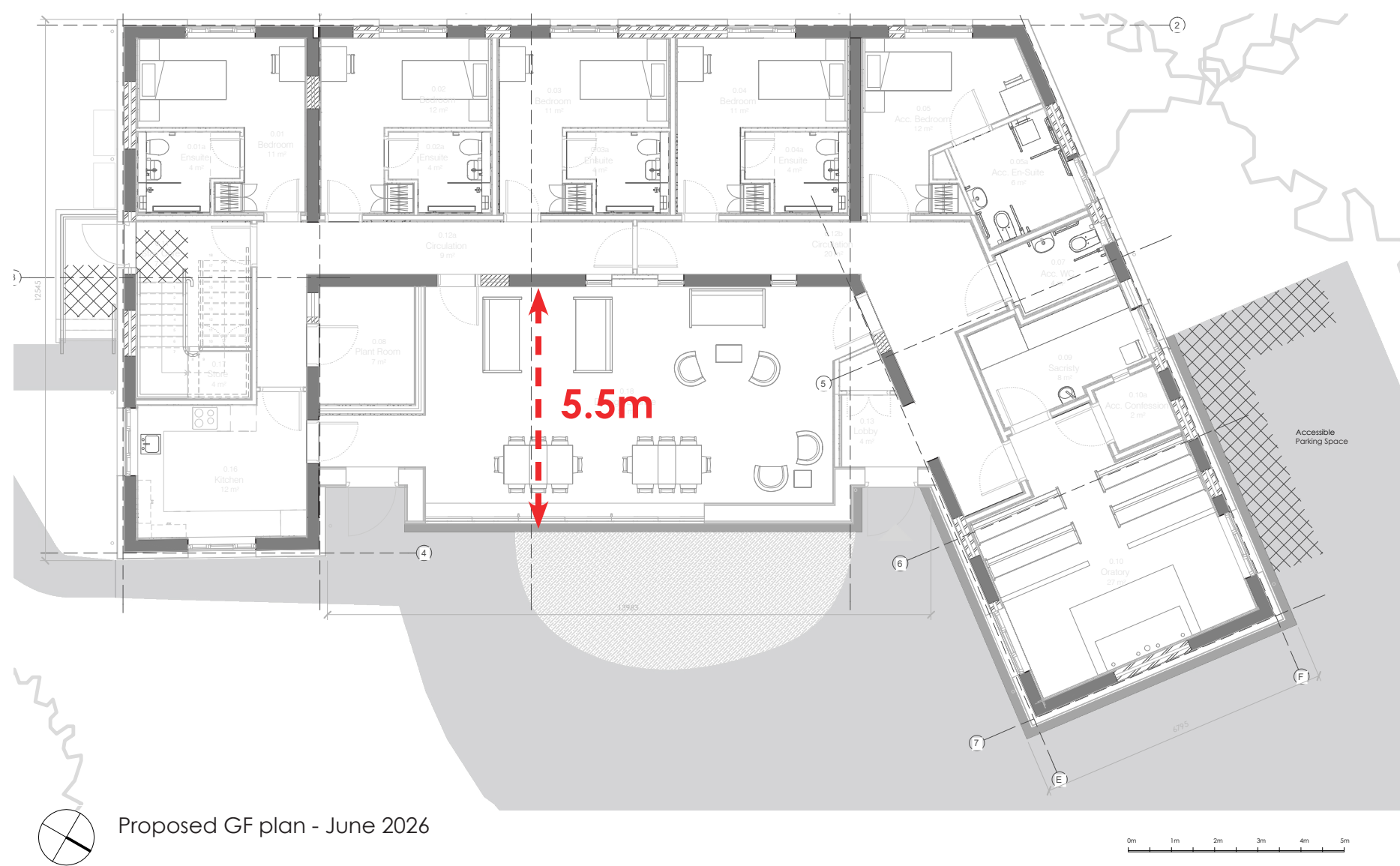
In response to the commentary received, the design was revised as follows :

- The extension is offset 5.5m from the face of the existing lodge, with a downward sloping mono-pitch roof. The extension is a timber frame, timber clad construction with east facing windows and a linear roofline.
- Technical details were provided for both the windows and external insulation. #

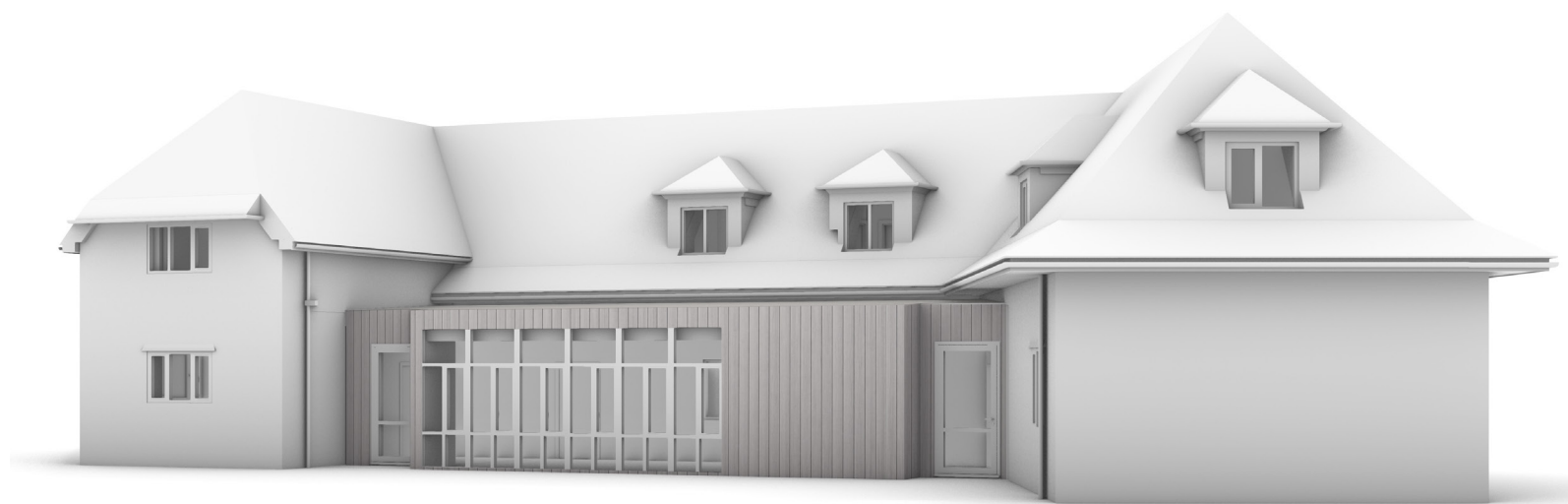
Commentary from the conservation officer received on 25th June stated :

- The revised Lodge extension remains unacceptable, with its scale, form and solidity continuing to cause heritage harm.
- The external insulation and timber windows are now acceptable in principle, subject to details of the leaded glazing.
- The proposal is considered to result in low to moderate harm to the non-designated heritage asset.
- The scheme should either be amended or supported by a clear justification of its public benefits

Design 3 – June 2026 pre-application



Proposed east elevation - June 2026



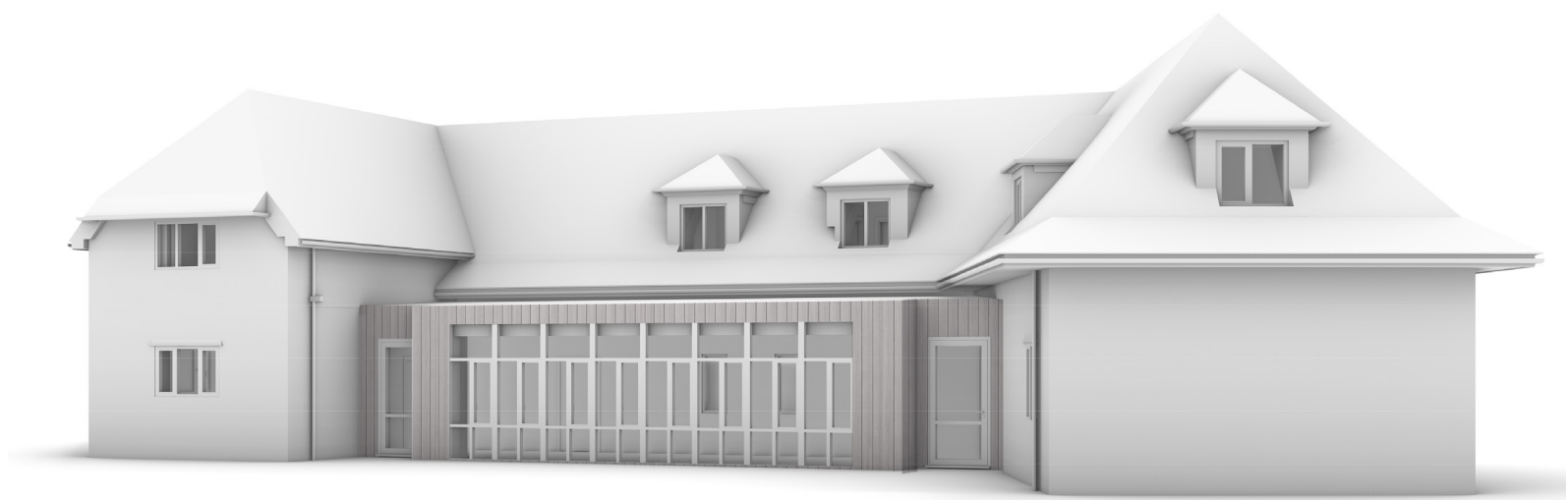
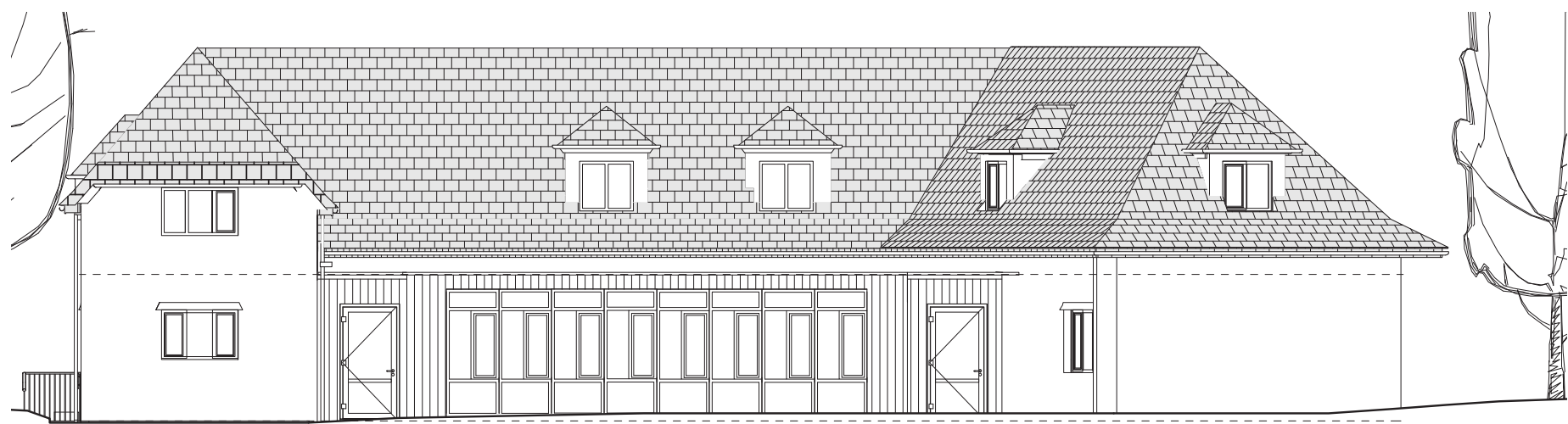
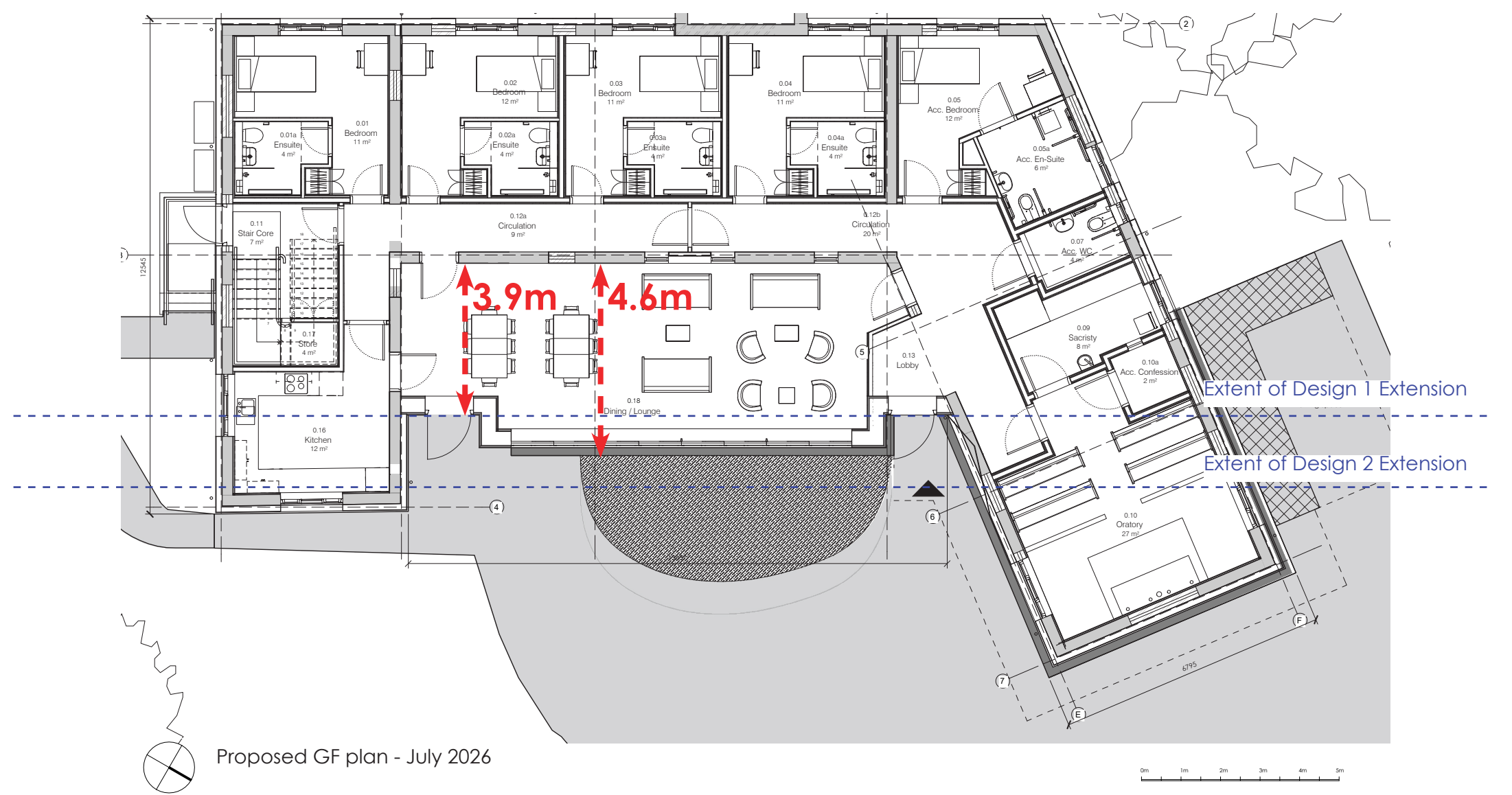
Design 4 – REVISED DESIGN

The latest proposal seeks to address the remaining heritage concerns while retaining the environmental and operational benefits established in the previous schemes. It has been developed following careful consideration of all previous design iterations and the comments received from the Conservation Officer throughout the pre-application process.

In developing the proposal, particular regard has also been given to the historical evolution of the Lodge. Physical evidence indicates that it was not originally conceived as a single U-shaped building, but that the existing form evolved through the joining of two separate structures. As a result, the courtyard elevation reflects the building's evolution rather than its original form. Furthermore, the principal relationships of the Lodge are to the south towards the Manor and to the north towards Chilling Street.

The proposal therefore seeks to reduce the perceived scale of the extension while reinforcing the legibility of the Lodge's historic form. The extension is set back 4.6m from the face of the existing Lodge and incorporates a downward-sloping mono-pitch roof. Where it adjoins the existing building, the extension steps back further to reduce the offset to 3.9m (as proposed in Design 1), helping to retain the visual expression of the original U-shaped courtyard. The extension is proposed as a timber-framed, timber-clad structure with east-facing windows and a linear rooflight, providing a lightweight and recessive appearance while maintaining the environmental performance and functionality established through the previous design iterations.

Design 4 – REVISED DEISGN



4.0 BALANCING HERITAGE HARM AGAINST PRACTICAL NECESSITY

The Conservation Officer's comments acknowledge that the proposal results in low to moderate harm to the heritage asset. The applicant accepts that introducing an enclosed communal space within the courtyard inevitably alters the appearance of this elevation. The principal question is therefore not whether change occurs, but whether the degree of change is justified by the wider operational, environmental and public benefits that the proposal delivers.

Returning to the previously approved conservatory is unfortunately no longer considered a realistic solution. As demonstrated by the accompanying Energy Statement, the approved conservatory would consume approximately 3.5 times more heating energy and over 4.4 times more cooling energy than the proposed insulated dining room, placing unacceptable pressure on the site's constrained electrical infrastructure.

Similarly, the approved conservatory cannot accommodate the communal dining and circulation requirements associated with the thirteen guest bedrooms provided within the Lodge. Its limited internal width and environmental performance mean that it would not provide an appropriate year-round communal space.

The proposal therefore seeks to minimise heritage impact whilst responding to practical operational constraints that were not fully appreciated when the earlier scheme was developed.

5.0 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

5.1. Materiality

The August 2025 proposal moved away from the conservatory concept and introduced a more thermally efficient enclosure. Following comments from the Conservation Officer regarding the use of brick, the proposal has been revised further and now proposes a lightweight timber-clad structure.

The timber cladding:

- provides a lighter architectural expression;
- clearly distinguishes new from old;
- avoids competing with the historic fabric;
- creates a contemporary intervention that complements the existing Lodge.

The intention is not to replicate the existing building but to provide an honest and legible contemporary addition.

The current proposals seek to provide:

- a thermally efficient communal space;
- accommodation capable of year-round use;
- improved environmental performance;
- a contemporary but subservient architectural intervention; and
- accommodation necessary to support the long-term operation of the conference centre.

5.2 Reversibility

A key principle of the approved scheme (Design 1) was that any intervention within the courtyard should be capable of removal. The current proposal fully embraces this principle.

The extension has been conceived as:

- a lightweight timber structure;
- a low-carbon form of construction;
- a structure capable of disassembly and removal.

The intervention therefore remains reversible and preserves the ability to return the Lodge to its current form should that ever be considered desirable.

5.3 Windows and External Insulation

The Local Planning Authority has indicated that the principle of replacing the existing uPVC windows and introducing external wall insulation is acceptable.

6.0 RESPONSE TO THE CONSERVATION OFFICER'S COMMENTS

This proposal has evolved directly in response to the issues raised by the Conservation Officer throughout the planning process.

Conservation Officer concern	Response
Brick extension considered overly dominant	Brick construction replaced with lightweight timber-clad construction.
Extension considered visually prominent	Roof profile revised and footprint reduced adjacent to the existing Lodge to improve legibility of the courtyard.
Windows lacked traditional detailing	Timber windows now incorporate leaded glazing to reflect the existing appearance.
External insulation required further justification	Detailed technical information has now been provided demonstrating retention of deep eaves, reveal proportions and lime-render finish.
Need for public benefit justification	Supporting Financial Viability and Energy Statements demonstrate the operational, environmental and heritage benefits arising from the revised proposal.

The applicant hopes this demonstrates that the scheme has not remained static, but has evolved through successive iterations in direct response to officer comments. The current proposal therefore represents an attempt to reach an appropriate balance between heritage conservation, environmental performance and the long-term operational needs of the estate.

7.0 PUBLIC BENEFITS

The Conservation Officer has identified that the proposal would result in a low to moderate degree of harm to the significance of the Lodge. The National Planning Policy Framework requires that such harm is weighed against the public benefits arising from the proposal.

The applicant considers that the proposal delivers substantial public benefits in five principal respects.

- **Securing the long-term future of Wickenden Manor :** The Netherhall Educational Association operates Wickenden Manor as an educational retreat and conference centre. The viability assessment demonstrates that a minimum of 36 bedrooms is required for the operation to remain financially sustainable. The revised scheme represents the minimum level of accommodation capable of achieving that threshold. Any further reduction in the Lodge would require either an increase in the scale of the Manor extension or acceptance of an operational deficit, neither of which represents a sustainable long-term solution.
- **Improving environmental performance :** The proposal substantially improves the thermal performance of the Lodge through high-performance insulation, improved windows and replacement of the previously approved glazed conservatory with an insulated communal space. The accompanying engineering assessment demonstrates that the revised dining room requires approximately one third of the heating energy and less than one quarter of the cooling energy of the approved conservatory. This significantly reduces operational carbon emissions throughout the life of the building.
- **Reducing pressure on existing infrastructure :** The site has a constrained electrical supply. The proposed development has therefore been carefully designed to operate within the available network capacity through a combination of improved building fabric, photovoltaic generation, battery storage and load management. This avoids the need for a new on-site electrical substation, which would have significant financial, visual and environmental implications.
- **Reducing pressure on the Manor :** A further reduction in the Lodge would inevitably require additional accommodation to be accommodated elsewhere. The only realistic location would be an increase in the scale of the Manor extension. Given the Manor's greater heritage significance, concentrating accommodation within the Lodge rather than enlarging the Manor represents the more appropriate heritage outcome.
- **Conserving the heritage asset through continued use :** The proposal supports the continued viable use of Wickenden Manor and its associated buildings. Long-term occupation, investment and maintenance remain the most effective means of securing the conservation of historic buildings. By improving operational efficiency and financial sustainability, the proposal contributes directly to the long-term stewardship of the wider estate.

8.0 CONCLUSION

The proposal before the Council represents a carefully considered and balanced response to previous comments. The extension:

- is subservient and reversible;
- improves environmental performance;
- preserves the character of the Lodge;
- provides essential communal accommodation;
- secures the long-term viability of the wider estate.

The applicant accepts that the proposal represents a balance between heritage conservation and operational necessity. It is not suggested that the scheme is without impact. Rather, it is submitted that the design has evolved through successive revisions to minimise that impact whilst delivering significant environmental, operational and public benefits. The applicant hopes that this revised proposal provides a sound basis for continued discussion with the Local Planning Authority to achieve an acceptable and deliverable solution.

APPENDIX 2



Mr Andy Watt, BSc (Hons), MTPL, MRTPI
Senior Planning Officer
Development Management
Mid-Sussex District Council
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH16 1SS

26 June 2026

Dear Andy

FINANCIAL VIABILITY STATEMENT – WICKENDEN MANOR AND LODGE

Planning Application Reference: DM/25/2716

Background

Planning permission was granted under reference DM/20/4179 for a scheme that provided 36 bedrooms within the Manor and a further 13 bedrooms within the Lodge, totalling 49 bedrooms across the site. The current revised proposals under DM/25/2716 have been substantially modified in response to concerns regarding the scale of the extension to the Manor, which is a Nationally Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA). The extension to the Manor has been significantly reduced, resulting in a revised bedroom count of 23 bedrooms in the Manor and 13 bedrooms in the Lodge, giving a total of 36 bedrooms across the site.

Financial Viability

The viability of the Wickenden operation has been modelled against actual running costs, historic occupancy data, and projected revenue. This modelling demonstrates that a minimum of 36 bedrooms is required for the business to be financially viable.

This minimum threshold reflects fixed operational costs — including staffing, maintenance, utilities, insurance, and debt servicing — which cannot be reduced proportionally with a reduction in room numbers. Below 36 bedrooms, income generated at realistic occupancy rates is insufficient to cover these fixed costs and deliver a sustainable return.

Netherhall Education Association
Head Office: 18A Netherhall Gardens, London NW3 5TH
Email: office@nea.netherhall.org.uk Website: www.nea.netherhall.org.uk

The revised scheme under DM/25/2716 achieves this minimum with 23 bedrooms in the Manor and 13 bedrooms in the Lodge. Any reduction in the number of bedrooms within the Lodge below 13 would bring the total below 36 and render the project financially unviable.

Occupancy rates have been modelled starting at 50% from Year 1 and increasing to a stabilised rate of 65% from Year 5. Reducing the Lodge by even one bedroom removes 2.78% of income capacity at every stage of the model. At the stabilised rate of 65% occupancy, 35 rooms yields only **63.2%** of maximum income rather than 65%. By Year 5+, losing 2 rooms cuts income by **3.61%** against an unchanged fixed cost base, and losing 3 rooms cuts it by **5.42%**. Since fixed costs don't reduce with fewer rooms, that shortfall is a direct hit to viability — not a marginal reduction.

It's also worth noting that at 33 rooms and 55% occupancy (Years 2–3), the effective income yield of **50.42%** is actually *below* the Year 1 baseline of 50% at full 36 rooms — meaning the scheme would never reach the income level the viability model requires even at improved occupancy rates.

To put it another way: every room lost from the Lodge cannot be replaced without either increasing the Manor footprint (heritage impact + cost) or accepting a reduction in income that, against fixed costs, tips the scheme into deficit.

Why the Lodge Extension Cannot Be Further Reduced

The Conservation Officer has suggested reverting to the Lodge extension as approved under DM/20/4179. However, the physical constraints of the approved Lodge footprint from that scheme cannot accommodate 13 bedrooms. Implementing the earlier Lodge extension would reduce the Lodge below 13 bedrooms, dropping the total site capacity below the minimum viable threshold of 36. The alternative — compensating for lost Lodge bedrooms by increasing the Manor extension — is not a viable solution for two reasons:

1. **Heritage impact:** Increasing the scale of the Manor extension is less desirable from a heritage perspective than extending the Lodge and runs contrary to the intent of the revised scheme, which was specifically designed to minimise the impact on the NDHA.
2. **Build cost:** Increasing the Manor extension to recover lost bedroom numbers would substantially increase construction costs, making the project financially unviable on the basis of build cost alone, independent of the operational viability argument above.

Netherhall Education Association
Head Office: 18A Netherhall Gardens, London NW3 5TH
Email: office@nea.netherhall.org.uk Website: www.nea.netherhall.org.uk

Conclusion

The current proposal — 23 bedrooms in the Manor and 13 bedrooms in the Lodge — represents the minimum viable configuration for the scheme. It has been carefully designed to balance heritage considerations, build cost, and operational viability. Any further reduction to the Lodge extension would undermine the financial viability of the project and cannot be offset by increasing the Manor extension without causing greater harm to the NDHA and significantly increasing costs.



Jack Valero
Chairman

Date
02.07.2026

To
Mr Andy Watt BSc (Hons),
MTPI, MRTPI
Senior Planning Officer
Development
Management
Mid Sussex District
Council
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH16 1SS

Reference
618.1.2

Energy Statement – Wickenden Manor and Lodge

Dear Andy,

Planning Application Reference: DM/25/2716

Background

Planning permission was previously granted under reference DM/20/4179.

The current application under reference DM/25/2716 has been substantially revised in response to concerns regarding the scale of the extension to the Manor.

Existing Power Supply

The existing site is served by a 200A three-phase electrical supply via an existing pole-mounted transformer.

Discussions with the Distribution Network Operator identified two potential options for accommodating the increased electrical demand arising from the proposed development:

Option A – Upgrade the Existing Pole-Mounted Transformer

- Upgrade the existing pole-mounted transformer to 200kVA.
- Remove the existing overhead electrical network and associated infrastructure.
- Estimated cost: approximately £22,000.

Option B – New Electrical Supply and Substation

- Provide a new electrical supply to the site.
- Construct a new on-site electrical substation.
- Estimated cost: approximately £600,000.

Integration

The second option is not financially viable within the overall project budget and would place an unreasonable burden on the development.

Accordingly, the design has been developed around the existing network constraints. The proposed strategy incorporates an electrical load management system together with battery energy storage, enabling the development to operate within the available electrical capacity without the need for a new substation. In addition, a photovoltaic (PV) array is proposed to offset a significant proportion of the site's daytime electrical demand, particularly during the summer and mid-season.

This approach places considerable emphasis on reducing the operational energy demand of the buildings themselves. In the case of the Lodge, this has been achieved primarily through improvements to the building fabric and thermal envelope.

Lodge Conservatory Comparison

The previously approved scheme included a 50m² glazed conservatory.

Under the Building Regulations, a conservatory must be thermally separated from the principal building. Whilst acceptable from a regulatory perspective, a fully glazed structure performs relatively poorly from an energy standpoint. Even with glazing achieving a U-value of approximately 1.4 W/m²K, the space experiences significant heat loss during winter, requiring substantial heating input. Equally, the extensive glazed envelope results in excessive solar gains during warmer months, increasing reliance on mechanical cooling to maintain comfortable internal temperatures.

The revised proposal replaces the conservatory with a 50m² enclosed dining room. This space has been designed to exceed the fabric performance required under Part L of the Building Regulations, with significantly improved wall and roof insulation together with carefully controlled glazing ratios to minimise unwanted solar gain.

The resulting reduction in peak energy demand is substantial.

Integration

	Peak Heating Electrical Load (kW)	Percentage of Total Available Load (%)	Peak Cooling Electrical Load (kW)	Percentage of Total Available Load (%)
Dining Room	0.424	0.33	1.324	1.02
Glazed Conservatory	1.46	1.12	5.864	4.51

The approved conservatory would therefore require approximately 3.5 times more heating energy and 4.5 times more cooling energy than the proposed dining room. This additional electrical demand would place unnecessary pressure on the site's limited electrical capacity, reducing the energy available for other essential building services including domestic hot water, catering equipment and general small power.

The comparison is equally evident when considering the fabric heat losses of the two options.

	Total Fabric Losses Heating Load (W)	Peak Cooling (W)
Dining Room	1060	3310
Glazed Conservatory	3595	14588

These figures demonstrate that the approved conservatory would experience approximately 3.4 times greater fabric heat losses and require over 4.4 times the cooling capacity of the proposed dining room.

Conclusion

The revised proposal has been developed not only in response to heritage considerations but also to address the practical limitations of the site's available electrical infrastructure.

Integration

By combining a high-performance building envelope, photovoltaic generation, battery storage and intelligent load management, the revised scheme enables the development to operate successfully within the existing electrical network capacity without requiring the construction of a new substation.

Replacing the previously approved conservatory with a thermally efficient dining room is a key component of this strategy, substantially reducing both heating and cooling demands while improving occupant comfort and ensuring the long-term operational viability of the development.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Spence', with a stylized, flowing script.

Mike Spence

Director

mike.spence@integrationuk.com