



**APPLICATIONS & APPEALS SERVICES**

**OLD HOUSE MANOR, COWFOLD ROAD,  
COOLHAM, RH13 8QL**

**SUPPORTING PLANNING & DESIGN AND  
ACCESS STATEMENT**

**NOVEMBER 2025**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Retrospective planning permission is sought for the conversion of an existing manor house into 14no. residential units. The site is Old House Manor estate, Cowfold Road, Coolham, RH13 8QL. Old House Manor was previously used as a religious retreat, known as St. Cuthman's Retreat, run by the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.

1.2 The details of the conversion will be described and appraised having regard to the following aspects:

- **Physical Context** – explains the physical context of the site and its surroundings;
- **Planning Context** – the planning history of the site and broad policy requirements;
- **Use** – the purpose of the proposal;
- **Amount** – the extent of development on the site;
- **Scale** – the physical size of the development;
- **Layout** – the relationship of the proposals to neighbouring properties;

- **Appearance** – details of materials, style and impact upon the visual amenities of the area;
- **Landscape** – impact of the proposal on the existing landscape;
- **Access** – access to the development and parking provision.

1.3 The Council has requested this retrospective planning application is submitted to regularise the use of the building as residential accommodation. Each unit was previously a bedsit and has been refurbished to a high standard, the only material change has been to add kitchen facilities to allow each occupier to prepare food for themselves in their own unit, rather than the previous communal kitchen. Additionally, the previous occupancy rate has been reduced to single occupancy, thereby lowering the number of people living on site compared to its historic use.

1.4 It is important to note, at the time the kitchenettes were installed the Applicant was unaware any planning rules were being breached, the aim of adding the kitchenettes was to improve the quality of the accommodation for future occupants to enable them to have private cooking facilities.

1.5 The Council is requested to consider this Statement alongside the submitted plans and this demonstration that the conversion accorded with the relevant planning policies and is acceptable in all respects.

## 2. PHYSICAL CONTEXT & PLANNING HISTORY

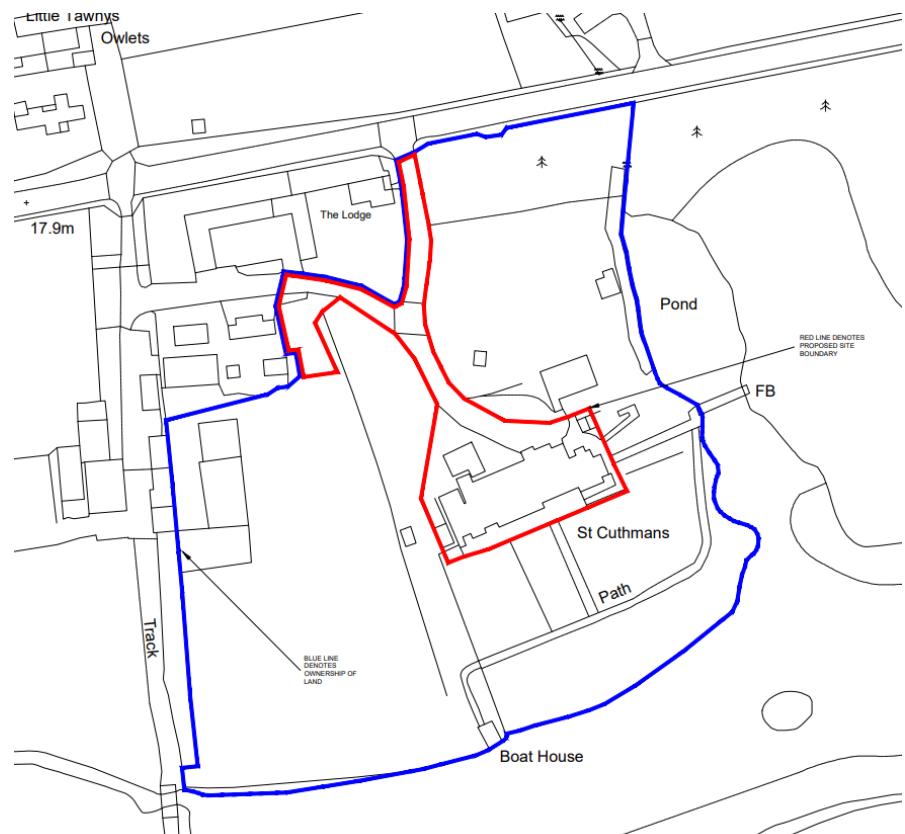
### Physical Context

2.1 The application site comprises an area of 0.22ha, it is formed by the Old House Manor 'The Manor'. The Manor is a substantial building set within a large curtilage. The Manor was previously operated as a religious retreat and has now been converted into residential accommodation. The existing bedsits on the first and second floors have been converted into 1-bed single occupancy residential units. The ground floor remains unaltered.

2.2 The Manor is located on the south side of Cowfold Road (A272), to the east of the village of Coolham, approximately 4km southeast of Billingshurst. Coolham is located largely around the crossroads of the A272 and the B2139 which runs southwards towards Thakeham and Southwater. The site can be accessed from Cowfold Road using the access track to the north which also provides access to the wider estate. The Manor was sold as part of the wider estate in 2021, the estate

now contains a holiday let, local businesses and agricultural land.

Figure 2.1: Site Location Plan



- 2.3 The application site is outside of the built-up area boundary and is therefore considered to be within the countryside for policy assessment.
- 2.4 The site is not subject to any environmental designations for its landscape or ecological value. There are no existing trees on the site and it is wholly located in Flood Zone 1.

#### Planning History

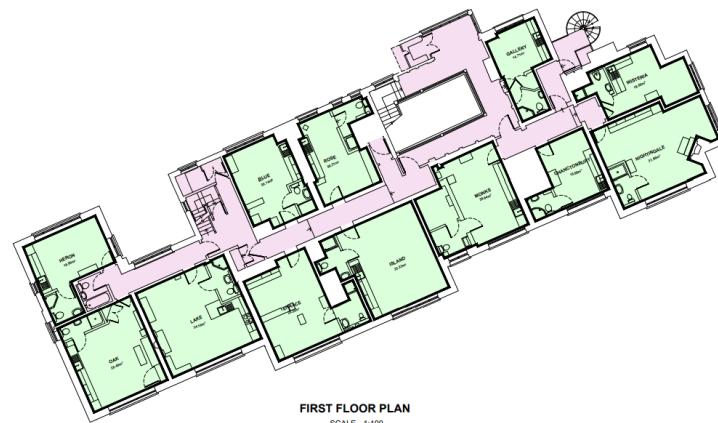
- 2.5 There is no recent planning history for Old House Manor.

### 3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The proposal is for retrospective planning permission to convert the Old House Manor into 14no. single occupancy residential units. The conversions took place on the first and second floor of the house, the ground floor remains unaltered.
- 3.2 The accommodation has been converted to a high standard, a kitchenette was installed in each bedsit bedroom to enable occupants to undertake private cooking. As such, the rooms were already in place as accommodation, the only change is adding the kitchenette instead of using the communal cooking facilities on the ground floor.
- 3.3 The units are fully occupied and provide a low-cost housing option which supports a diverse range of individuals working in an array of different jobs locally including engineers, carers and mental health professionals. The existing list of tenants is provided at appendix NJA/01 which highlights how the majority of tenants work in and around Horsham and Crawley, in turn supporting local services.

- 3.4 The floor plans for the first and second floors are provided at Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: First and Second Floor Plans



Source: DMA Building Design (2025)

3.5 The existing access has been retained, off the driveway from Cowfold Road. The existing parking area located to the north of The Manor has also been retained.

Figure 3.2: Existing Site Photographs



*Existing Rear (South) Elevation*



*Existing Converted Studio*



*Existing Converted Studio*

Source: OnTheMarket (2025)

## 4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

#### Sustainable Development

4.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and Wales and how these should be applied. It provides a framework for the preparation of local plans for housing and other development. The NPPF should be read as a whole.

4.2 Paragraph 2 of the NPPF sets out that '***Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements***'.

4.3 Paragraph 7 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has the following three overarching objectives which are independent but need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways:

- a) ***'an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;***
- b) ***'a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and***

*support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and*

*c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy'.*

4.4 Paragraph 10 states '**So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (Paragraph 11).** For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

4.5 Paragraph 12 of the Framework states that '**The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making.** Where a

*planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not normally be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed'.*

#### Plan and Decision Making

4.6 Paragraph 34 requires local plans and spatial development strategies to be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years and should then be updated as necessary. In particular, 'Relevant strategic policies will need updating at least once every five years if their applicable local housing need figure has changed significantly; and they are likely to require earlier review if local housing need is expected to change significantly in the future'.

4.7 In terms of decision-making, the Framework states at paragraph 39 that '**Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a**

***positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible'.***

**Housing Provision**

4.8 Paragraph 61 states '***To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay. The overall aim should be to meet as much as an area's identified housing need as possible, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community'.***

4.9 Paragraph 62 states that to determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning practice. Within this context, paragraph 64 requires the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community to be assessed and reflected in planning policies.

4.10 Paragraph 72 requires strategic policy-making authorities to have a clear understanding of the land available in their area through the preparation of a strategic housing land availability assessment. Planning policies should identify a supply of specific, deliverable sites for five years following the intended date of adoption and specific deliverable sites or broad locations for growth for the subsequent years 6-10 and where possible, years 11-15 of the remaining plan period.

4.11 Paragraph 73 sets out that '***Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built out relatively quickly'.***

4.12 Paragraph 78 requires local planning authorities to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old.

4.13 In rural areas, paragraph 82 requires planning policies and decisions to be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs. To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities (Paragraph 83).

4.14 Paragraph 84 states that planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside, unless certain circumstances apply.

#### Highways and Car Parking

4.15 Paragraph 109 requires transport issues to be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, using a vision-led approach to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular

places. This is to ensure that (inter alia) the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed.

4.16 Paragraph 112 states that if setting local parking standards for residential and non-residential development, policies should take into account the accessibility of the development, its type, mix and use, the availability of land and opportunities for public transport, local car ownership levels and the need to ensure that adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.

4.17 Paragraph 116 makes it clear that '***Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.***'

#### Effective Use of Land

4.18 Paragraph 124 requires planning policies and decisions to promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring healthy living conditions.

4.19 Paragraph 125 states that planning policies and decision should encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land. Furthermore, paragraph 128 sets out that local planning authorities should take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans where this would help to meet identified needs.

4.20 Paragraph 129 states that '***Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land.....'***

#### Design

4.21 In terms of design, Section 12 seeks to achieve well designed places sets out that the '***The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities***' (Paragraph 131).

4.22 Paragraph 135 further states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping. Development should also be sympathetic to local character and history and should be designed with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

4.23 Paragraph 139 states that '***Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:***

***a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes: and/or***

***b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit with the overall form and layout of their surroundings'.***

#### Climate Change

4.24 Paragraph 161 requires the planning system to support the transit to a low carbon future and to taking into account flood risk. New development should be planned in ways which avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change (paragraph 164).

#### Countryside

4.25 Paragraph 187 states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural local environment by: (inter alia) '***recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside....***'.

4.26 Paragraph 189 sets out that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which

have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

#### Biodiversity

4.27 Paragraph 192 requires the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity. Paragraph 193 states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should avoid significant harm to biodiversity which should be adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for. Development should not result in the loss of deterioration of irreplaceable habitats unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

#### Ground Conditions and Pollution

4.28 Paragraph 196 requires planning policies and decisions to ensure that a site is suitable for its proposed use taking account of ground conditions and any risks arising from land instability and contamination. Where a site is affected by contamination or land stability issues, responsibility for

securing a safe development rests with the developer and/or landowner (paragraph 197).

4.29 Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment (paragraph 198).

**Horsham District Planning Framework (2015)**

4.30 Local planning policy is set out in the Local Plan, the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) adopted was in 2015. The following policies of the HDPF are most relevant to the proposal:

- Policy 1: Sustainable Development
- Policy 2: Strategic Policy: Strategic Development
- Policy 3: Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy
- Policy 4: Strategic Policy: Settlement Expansion
- Policy 15: Strategic Policy: Housing Provision
- Policy 24: Strategic Policy: Environmental Protection

• Policy 25: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character

• Policy 26: Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection

• Policy 31: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

• Policy 32: The Quality of New Development

• Policy 33: Development Principles

• Policy 35: Strategic Policy: Climate Change

• Policy 36: Strategic Policy: Appropriate Energy Use

• Policy 37: Sustainable Construction

• Policy 39: Strategic Policy: Infrastructure Provision

• Policy 40: Sustainable Transport

• Policy 41: Parking

**Shipley Neighbourhood Development Plan**

4.31 The Shipley Neighbourhood Plan covers the entire Parish, including the villages of Shipley and Coolham, and the hamlets of Brooks Green, and Dragons Green. It was made in August 2020 to influence and guide development within the Parish over the plan period up to 2031. Policy Ship HD1: New housing development this Plan is relevant to the proposal and discussed further below.

## 5. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL: USE, AMOUNT & SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT

### The Principle of Development

5.1 NPPF paragraph 7 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives: economic, social and environmental (NPPF paragraph 8).

5.2 Paragraph 10 of the NPPF states '***So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11). For decision-taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay***'.

5.3 HDPF Policy 1 states that when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within the NPPF. Therefore, planning applications

that accord with the policies of the HDPF will be approved without delay (unless material considerations indicate otherwise). Where there are no policies relevant to the application, or relevant policies are out of date, Policy 1 states that the:

***Council will grant permission, unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:***

- Any adverse impacts of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or***
- Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted***.

5.4 The application site is located within the countryside, outside of a settlement boundary. HDPF policy 26 seeks to protect the countryside from inappropriate development and states that new development must meet one of the following criteria:

- 1. *Support the needs of agriculture or forestry;***
- 2. *Enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;***
- 3. *Provide for quiet informal recreational use; or***
- 4. *Enable the sustainable development of rural areas'.***

5.5 In addition, the policy requires proposals to be of a scale appropriate to the countryside character and location and that it should not lead individually, or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of activity in the countryside. New development should protect and/or conserve, and/or enhance the key features and characteristics of the landscape character in which it is located.

5.6 The conversion of The Manor into individual residential units did not involve any external alterations and therefore ensured the building continued to maintain the character of the building. Additionally, its impact upon the visual amenities of the countryside remained the same.

5.7 Whilst it is acknowledged the site's location is currently within the countryside and not adjacent to the BUAB, for the reasons described within this Statement, the site is considered to be

sustainably located and there are a number of material planning considerations that weigh heavily in favour of the proposal when considered in the planning balance, primarily the fact the development was a conversion and therefore has no impact on the surrounding countryside. Other matters in favour are set out below.

#### Housing Land Supply

5.8 It remains the case that the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing as required by the NPPF. The latest AMR confirms that the Council can demonstrate only 1.0 year of supply. As a result, it is reiterated that the Council's policies in respect of the supply and location of new homes (HDPF policies 2, 3, 4, 15 and 26) are out of date and the tilted balance of NPPF paragraph 11 d) is engaged.

5.9 Although the application site is located within the countryside, it is not situated within a protected countryside landscape such as a National Landscape. As such, there is no conflict with NPPF paragraph 11 d)(i). This Statement further confirms that overall there are no adverse impacts of granting retrospective planning permission for the conversion that

would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the provision of 14no. residential units.

5.10 The proposal has positively contributed towards the supply of windfall homes within the District; this is an important source of supply as noted at NPPF paragraph 73 which states that ***'Small and medium sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly'.*** Furthermore, the conversion has provided 14no. new homes within the rural area; such homes help to support rural communities (NPPF paragraph 83).

#### Location and Facilitating Appropriate Development

5.11 In terms of the Council's spatial strategy, Policy 2 of the HDPF seeks to maintain the rural character of the District and states that new development should be focused in and around '***the key settlement of Horsham***' with growth in the rest of the District in accordance with the settlement hierarchy set out at HDPF Policy 3 and also in accordance with HDPF Policy 4.

5.12 Policy 3 establishes the settlement hierarchy for the District and confirms that development will be permitted within towns

and villages which have defined built-up areas. Coolham is defined as an '*Unclassified Settlement*'.

5.13 Whilst the application site is not located within an existing defined settlement boundary, this does not mean to say that the site is unsustainably located by definition. The site is within walking distance of the facilities provided in Coolham which supports the rural economy. There is a regular bus service from Coolham to Horsham which takes approximately 25 minutes.

5.14 Policy Ship HD1: New housing development within the Shipley Neighbourhood Plan sets out: '***Applications for housing developments within Shipley and Coolham villages, and Dragons Green and Brooks Green hamlets, will be considered favourably where the proposals meet all of the following criteria:***

- 1. The proposed development is for an infill gap, or on previously developed land, within the continuity of existing buildings.***

**2. The proposed development will not result in the outward extension of the villages or hamlets onto greenfield land.**

**3. The proposed development delivers new affordable housing.**

**4. The proposed development reflects the scale and density of existing development in the village or hamlet where it is located.**

**5. The proposed development responds positively to Shipley Parish Design Guidance.'**

5.15 In response to this policy the scale of development is small and contained within an existing building. It did not result in any outward extension into greenfield land and offers low-cost accommodation options. It reflects the scale and density of the existing Manor and responds positively to Shipley Parish Design Guidance. Additionally, the proposal did not result in a significant increase in vehicle movements within the rural area. In this case, the day-to-day needs of the occupiers may be met with short journeys and this does not represent an unusual pattern of vehicle movements in the rural area. Therefore, the policy fully aligns with Policy Ship HD1.

5.16 Importantly, the NPPF paragraph 110 requires the planning system to actively manage patterns of growth but states that it should be recognised that '**opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making**'. Similarly, the West Sussex Transport Plan (2011-2026) notes the difference in application and expectations between urban and rural areas accepting that the reliance on the car is greatest in rural communities and different considerations and flexibility should be applied to the provision of new housing within rural areas.

5.17 The site is not 'physically' isolated from a settlement given it's located within Coolham and its proximity to Billingshurst and Horsham described above. This demonstrates that the application site's location within the countryside does not necessarily make it 'unsustainable' simply by definition and the conversion did not create unsustainable travel patterns given the site's proximity to nearby settlements and links to public transport.

5.18 Furthermore, the residential units are not remote from other built form as it is situated within the wider Old House Manor estate. The conversion was designed to ensure the building remains respectful of the spacious character of the area but would not be isolated from other development or from a settlement and local community.

5.19 HDPF Policy 4 supports the growth of settlements across the District in order to meet identified local housing, employment and community needs. Therefore, outside built up area boundaries (BUAB), Policy 4 permits the expansion of settlements subject to the following:

- 1. 'The site is allocated in the Local Plan or in a Neighbourhood Plan and adjoins an existing settlement edge.***
- 2. The level of expansion is appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement type.***
- 3. The development is demonstrated to meet the identified local housing needs and/or employment needs or will assist the retention and enhancement of community facilities and services.***
- 4. The impact of the development individually or cumulatively does not prejudice comprehensive development, in order to not conflict with the development strategy; and***
- 5. The development is contained within an existing defensible boundary and the landscape and townscape character features are maintained and enhanced'.***

5.20 The supporting text for HDPF Policy 4 (and 3) sets out the following justification - 'to ensure that development takes place in a manner that ensures the settlement pattern and the rural landscape character of the District is retained and enhanced, but still enables settlements to develop in order for them to continue to grow and thrive' (HDPF Paragraph 4.6).

5.21 Given the fact that the Council cannot demonstrate an appropriate supply of housing, the Council's 'Shaping Development in Horsham District Planning Advice Note' (SD PAN) (2025) acknowledges that the Council is likely to receive applications for residential development outside of the defined built up area boundaries and on unallocated sites. Paragraph 5.12 of the SD PAN sets out that the Council will consider

such proposals positively where the following criteria is met. The conversion meets the below criteria (text in bold italics) as set out below. The below essentially follows the same principles of HDPF policy 4 with the exception that it does not contain the same requirement for sites to be allocated for development in the Local or Neighbourhood Plan.

**1. *'The site adjoins the existing settlement edge as defined by the BUAB;***

*The application site is an existing building located within a wider estate which provides employment and tourist accommodation, as such, although the site is outside the BUAB it is not in an isolated location.*

**2. *The level of expansion is appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement the proposal relates to;***

*14no. units have been created in a pre-existing building, the development is wholly appropriate to the settlement and location within the countryside.*

**3. *The proposal demonstrates that it meets local housing needs or will assist the retention and enhancement of community facilities and services;***

*The conversion meets local housing needs in respect of the clear need for new, low-cost housing within the District through windfall development. Appendix NJA/01 highlights how the majority of the occupants of the units work locally which in turn ensures they support the facilities and services within Coolham and other local settlements.*

**4. *The impact of the development either individually or cumulatively does not prejudice comprehensive long-term development; and***

*The site is a pre-existing building and therefore does not prejudice comprehensive long-term development.*

**5. *The development is contained within an existing defensible boundary and the landscape character features are maintained and enhanced'***

*The site is an old manor and therefore a distinctively self-contained area. The development is wholly*

*contained within an existing defensible boundary of the building and important landscape features have been retained. The conversion did not result in any harmful encroachment into undeveloped countryside.*

5.22 The application site is considered to be sustainably located and in a suitable position to accommodate the residential accommodation without conflicting with the Council's development strategy in this regard.

5.23 In summary of HDPF policies 1, 2, 3 and 4, these policies encourage sustainable development and allow for the expansion of settlements outside of built up area boundaries where the level of expansion is appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement type.

5.24 Given the sustainable location of the application site and the lack of any harm caused to the visual amenities of the countryside landscape due to it being a conversion, the proposal does not conflict with the overarching principles of the Council's SD PAN or local planning policy.

### Rural Housing

5.25 It has been acknowledged that HDPF Policy 26 seeks to protect the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside against inappropriate development. However, Policy 26 must also be read in the context of the text at HDPF paragraph 9.18 which sets out that '***The Council is seeking to identify the most valued parts of the district for protection, as well as maintain and enhance this natural beauty and the amenity of the district's countryside.***

5.26 The NPPF supports the provision of rural homes at paragraph 83 where it states:

***'To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby'.***

5.27 This recognises the importance of allowing new residential development within the rural areas which can help to sustain local rural communities. As such, appropriate residential development on sustainably located sites, in this case, an existing building, is arguably 'essential' to rural areas and allows the sustainable development of rural areas (HDPF policy 26, criterion 4).

5.28 The conversion has not resulted in significant increase in the overall level of activity within the countryside compared to the previous use as a religious retreat. It is the Applicant's understanding under the previous use each bedsit potentially had two occupants and the commercial kitchens were in operation, as such, the amount of activity in terms of people, amount of car parking and water consumption would have been significantly higher than the existing single-occupancy residential units.

5.29 Furthermore, given the building already existed the residential units do not appear at odds with the context of the site's surroundings. The conversion complies with policy 26 in respect of its requirement for proposals to be of a scale appropriate to the countryside character and location and to protect/conserve/enhance key features and characteristics of the landscape character.

**Efficient Use of Land**

5.30 Paragraph 124 of the NPPF states that '***Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions***'.

5.31 The existing manor house provides 14.no residential units fully contained within the existing building. It has provided low-cost accommodation for local residents and is therefore highly efficient use of land. As such, the conversion wholly safeguarded and improved the local environment to ensure the building continued to be maintained. The Manor now provides healthy living conditions as set out further in the layout, design and appearance section below.

## 6. LAYOUT, DESIGN & APPEARANCE

### Design

6.1 The NPPF sets out that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Developments should be visually attractive and sympathetic to the local character of the surrounding area and should optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (paragraphs 131 and 135).

6.2 HDPF policy 32 requires high quality design for all development in the District. In addition, HDPF Policy 33 sets out the Council's key development control criteria and states that development should make efficient use of land, should not cause harm to neighbouring residential amenities, should be appropriate in scale, massing and appearance and be of a high standard of design. Development should also be locally distinctive in character and should use high standards of building materials, finishes and landscaping.

6.3 Policy 33 sets out "***In order to conserve and enhance the natural and built environment developments shall be required to:***

- 1. Make efficient use of land, and prioritise the use of previously developed land and buildings whilst respecting any constraints that exist;***

6.4 The proposal makes efficient use of an existing building that has previously been used as a religious retreat. This use no longer exists and therefore using the building for residential uses is the most efficient use of the site to meet local housing needs. The proposal complies with criterion 1.

- 2. Ensure that it is designed to avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers/users of nearby property and land, for example through overlooking or noise, whilst having regard to the sensitivities of surrounding development;***

6.5 The building is located away from neighbouring properties and there has been no adverse impact caused in respect of

any loss of privacy, overbearing appearance or loss of light to neighbours. The proposal complies with criterion 2.

***3. Ensure that the scale, massing and appearance of the development is of a high standard of design and layout and where relevant relates sympathetically with the built surroundings, landscape, open spaces and routes within and adjoining the site, including any impact on the skyline and important views;***

6.6 The appearance of the building has remained unaltered as a result of the conversion. The accommodation is of an appropriate scale and mass and would be viewed in context of the other built form on the wider Old House Manor estate. The building is not located within an isolated countryside position due to forming part of the wider site, as such, there is limited impact upon the rural character and appearance of the area. The proposal complies with criterion 3.

***4. Are locally distinctive in character, respect the character of the surrounding area (including its overall setting, townscape features, views and***

***green corridors) and, where available and applicable, take account of the recommendations/policies of the relevant Design Statements and Character Assessments;***

6.7 The Manor is of a grand design that is an important part of the rural landscape. As set out, it is set within other built form and its conversion has not resulted in any harmful spread of development within the countryside. The proposal complies with criterion 4.

***5. Use high standards of building materials, finishes and landscaping; and includes the provision of street furniture and public art where appropriate;***

6.8 A range of high-quality building materials were used to undertake the conversion internally. No external materials were altered and therefore there is no conflict with criterion 5.

***6. Presume in favour of the retention of existing important landscape and natural features, for example trees, hedges, banks and watercourses. Development must relate sympathetically to the***

*local landscape and justify and mitigate against any losses that may occur through the development;*

6.9 No trees, hedges, banks or watercourses were affected by the conversion. There is no conflict with criterion 6.

***7. Ensure buildings and spaces are orientated to gain maximum benefit from sunlight and passive solar energy, unless this conflicts with the character of the surrounding townscape, landscape or topography where it is of good quality.***

6.10 Each residential unit is sufficiently lit by natural light from appropriately positioned and sized windows. The proposal complies with criterion 7.

***8. Proposals will also need to take the following into account where relevant:***

***Incorporate where appropriate convenient, safe and visually attractive areas for the parking of***

*vehicles and cycles, and the storage of bins/recycling facilities without dominating the development or its surroundings;*

6.11 The accommodation uses the existing hardstanding to the north which provides ample car parking spaces for the number of residents. There is also space for the suitable storage of bins/recycling facilities at the property. The proposal complies with criterion 8.

***9. Incorporate measures to reduce any actual or perceived opportunities for crime or antisocial behaviour on the site and in the surrounding area, and create visually attractive frontages where adjoining streets and public spaces, including appropriate windows and doors to assist in the informal surveillance of public amenity areas by occupants of the site;***

6.12 The residential units provide an appropriate use within a safe and secure building. The close relationship of the accommodation to each other and to buildings on the wider

site provides for natural surveillance within the curtilage. The proposal complies with criterion 9.

***10. Contribute to the removal of physical barriers; and,***

6.13 The proposal raises no implications in respect of criterion 10.

***11. Make a clear distinction between the public and private spaces within the site.***

6.14 Internally within the conversion the residential units are private spaces and all other areas are communal, including the external areas.

6.15 Overall, it is demonstrated that the proposal complies in full with HDPF Policy 33.

**Impact on Countryside**

6.16 Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (inter alia) '***recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside***'.

6.17 HDPF Policy 24 requires the high-quality environment of the District to be protected through the planning process. Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the HDPF promote development that is of a high-quality design, which is sympathetic to the character and distinctiveness of the site and surroundings. The landscape character of the area should be protected, conserved and enhanced, with proposals contributing to a sense of place through appropriate scale, massing and appearance.

6.18 The nature of the conversion ensures that the general character and appearance of the countryside was not significantly altered as a result of the proposal. There is no greater visual impact within the landscape. The wider site is also screened by mature trees, hence there is no further landscaping required in order to protect the countryside.

6.19 In summary, the conversion to residential units resulted in no impact to the character and appearance of the area and the high-quality environment is fully protected. The proposal is therefore fully compliant with NPPF paragraphs 187 and HDPF policies 24, 25, 32 and 33.

### **Impact on Amenity**

6.20 HDPF policy 32 states that development will be expected to provide an attractive, functional, accessible, safe, and adaptable environment that contributes to a sense of place both in the buildings and spaces themselves. Policy 33 continues that development shall be required to ensure that it is designed to avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers/users of nearby property and land.

6.21 The design of each residential unit is compact yet functional and meets the day-to-day needs of the current occupants. Although the units do not meet nationally described space standards the conversion took place before these standards needed to be met for studio type units. Each unit is single occupancy and therefore their size is proportionate to the number of occupants per unit.

6.22 The units are accessed off a communal corridor, and all have access to the significant grounds the property sits within. The occupants benefit from significant natural daylight due to the large windows located in each unit. The kitchen and bathroom facilities are modern and built to a high specification.

6.23 The units do not generate any major noise, the building is located away from neighbouring residential dwellings and there is no adverse impact caused in respect of any loss of privacy, overbearing appearance or loss of light to neighbours.

6.24 The residential units meet the needs of the occupiers and does not result in an unacceptable impact on the amenity of occupants or nearby residential neighbours and the requirements of policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF would be met as part of the proposal.

## 7. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Council's target to become carbon neutral by 2030 (direct emissions) and by 2050 (indirect emissions).

### Sustainability

- 7.1 Paragraph 152 of the NPPF emphasises the need for the planning system to support the transition to a low-carbon future, while paragraph 157 requires developments to minimise energy consumption and promote renewable and low-carbon energy. Paragraphs 183 to 185 further require that new development mitigates environmental impacts through sustainable design and construction.
- 7.2 HDPF Policy 35 sets out that development will be supported where it makes a clear contribution to mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change and to meet the District's carbon reduction targets. Development must be designed to mitigate the effects of climate change and to adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- 7.3 The accommodation has been carefully and specifically designed to ensure that it is environmentally sustainable during its conversion and future occupation. This ensures compliance with the NPPF and HDPF policy 35 and the

## 8. ACCESS AND HIGHWAYS

8.1 The NPPF sets out at paragraph 116 that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

8.2 HDPF policies 40 and 41 seek to ensure that proposals incorporate safe and adequate means of access and that there is appropriate car parking provision.

8.3 The existing access route off the driveway from Cowfold Road is utilised by the occupants of the Manor. Importantly, this access route has been subject to a decrease in number of vehicle movements due to the units now being single occupancy and the commercial kitchen not being in use anymore. Additionally, there has also been no adverse effect upon the surrounding road network.

8.4 The existing hardstanding to the north of the accommodation is used to provide ample car parking spaces and there is sufficient manoeuvring space.

8.5 The occupants also benefit from a range of walking and cycling routes within the vicinity. This includes the rural public right of way network locally and the Downslink Cycle Route.

8.6 Overall, the access and car parking provision are more than adequate and the proposal complies with policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF and the NPPF.

## 9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Retrospective planning permission is sought for the conversion of an existing manor house into 14no. residential units at Old House Manor estate, Cowfold Road, Coolham.

9.2 The conversion is compliant with the aims of the NPPF and the HDPF to provide much needed low-cost residential accommodation in the District. The proposal represents the most efficient use of land and made a small but important contribution towards windfall housing provision. The cumulative provision of individual homes should not be underestimated as acknowledged by NPPF paragraph 73. The long term, continued lack of housing supply within the District undermines the Government's intentions to 'significantly boost' the supply of new homes (NPPF paragraph 61).

9.3 NPPF paragraph 83 encourages the sustainable development of rural areas and sets out that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. This statement has set out that the occupiers of the conversion residential units help to support local services and facilities within the rural community.

9.4 It has been demonstrated the amenity for occupants and neighbours has been fully respected and sufficient car parking and access is also provided. The nature of the conversion ensures there was no significant impact upon longer range countryside views and no harm caused to the visual amenities of the countryside landscape. The proposal does not conflict with HDPF policy 26 in this regard which seeks to protect the countryside from inappropriate development.

9.5 This Statement demonstrates that there are no adverse impacts of granting planning permission that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of 14no. residential units in a sustainable location. Therefore, in accordance with paragraphs 11 and 39 of the NPPF and HDPF policy 1, retrospective planning permission should be granted for the conversion.