



Planning Statement

Erection of gym buildings

**Cottesmore Golf & Country Club, Buchan Hill, Pease
Pottage, RH11 9AT**

prepared by

WPS Planning

Planning Statement

Cottesmore Golf & Country Club

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by WPS Planning in support of a full planning application for the erection of a new gym building at Cottesmore Golf & Country Club, Buchan Hill, West Sussex. The proposal seeks permission for a modest, single-storey building which will provide additional fitness facilities for the benefit of existing members of the golf and country club. The development has been carefully designed to complement the existing leisure facilities whilst respecting the sensitive woodland setting in which it is located.
- 1.2 Cottesmore Golf & Country Club is a long-established leisure destination comprising golf courses, clubhouse facilities, health and fitness provision, tennis courts and associated recreational uses. The Club has evolved over many years and represents an important leisure, sporting and tourism destination within Horsham District, attracting members and visitors from across the wider region. Continued investment in high-quality facilities is essential to maintaining the long-term viability and competitiveness of the business.
- 1.3 The proposed building has been designed to supplement the existing gym facilities and will provide additional exercise space for existing members of the Club. The proposal does not introduce a new leisure use, nor does it create an independent commercial operation. Instead, it represents a modest enhancement of an established leisure facility that already operates successfully from the site.
- 1.4 The proposed building has deliberately been designed as a lightweight structure positioned upon a raised decking platform. This approach eliminates the need for traditional strip foundations or extensive excavation, significantly reducing disturbance to the ground and protecting the extensive root systems associated with the mature trees surrounding the site. This sensitive construction methodology forms one of the key environmental benefits of the proposal.

- 1.5 Architecturally, the building adopts a simple contemporary appearance incorporating horizontal timber cladding, large glazed openings and a shallow mono-pitched roof. The choice of natural materials reflects the woodland character of the surrounding landscape whilst ensuring that the building remains visually recessive within its setting. The overall scale has been carefully controlled to remain subordinate to the existing leisure complex and surrounding mature vegetation.
- 1.6 This Statement demonstrates that the proposal represents sustainable development which accords with the National Planning Policy Framework together with the adopted Horsham District Planning Framework and emerging Horsham Local Plan. As demonstrated throughout this document, the proposal will preserve the character of the area, protect existing trees, safeguard neighbouring amenity, generate no highway impacts and deliver meaningful economic benefits through continued investment in an established rural leisure business.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 Cottesmore Golf & Country Club occupies an extensive rural site at Buchan Hill within Horsham District. The Club is an established leisure destination comprising golf courses, practice facilities, clubhouse, health club, tennis courts and associated recreational infrastructure. The application site forms part of the existing leisure complex and lies immediately adjacent to the current gym facilities.
- 2.2 The proposed building will occupy an area already associated with the existing outdoor fitness facilities. The site comprises a previously managed area immediately adjoining the established gym and exercise track and therefore represents a logical and functional extension of the existing leisure facilities rather than development extending into undeveloped countryside.
- 2.3 The application site benefits from exceptional natural screening. Mature oak trees

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together with dense woodland planting surround the site on several sides, creating a well-enclosed environment where existing built development is largely concealed from wider public viewpoints. The dense tree canopy and understorey vegetation substantially limit external visibility of the proposed building, ensuring that its visual influence upon the wider landscape will be extremely limited.

- 2.4 The submitted photographs demonstrate the heavily wooded nature of the site. Large mature oak trees dominate the landscape whilst established rhododendron, ferns, shrubs and woodland groundcover reinforce the natural character of the area. The proposed building has been positioned to work with these existing landscape features rather than requiring their removal.
- 2.5 Existing recreational infrastructure, including the running track, outdoor exercise areas and associated facilities, demonstrates that this part of the site already performs a leisure function. The proposal therefore represents the continuation of an established pattern of development rather than the introduction of a new activity within the countryside.
- 2.6 Vehicular access to the site is already well established through the existing golf club entrance. Ample parking is available within the existing leisure complex and the proposal does not require any alteration to access arrangements, internal circulation or parking provision. Existing infrastructure is fully capable of accommodating the modest increase in floorspace associated with the proposal.
- 2.7 The surrounding landscape remains an important characteristic of the site. The mature woodland provides an attractive setting for the leisure complex whilst contributing significantly to local biodiversity and visual amenity. The proposal has therefore been specifically designed to avoid unnecessary disturbance to existing vegetation and root systems through the use of a lightweight raised deck construction.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 Cottesmore Golf & Country Club is an established leisure destination that has evolved over many years through a series of planning permissions facilitating the development of golf, leisure, health and hospitality facilities. The site has an established planning history that reflects its long-standing use as a recreational and tourism destination within Horsham District.
- 3.2 The application site forms part of the existing leisure complex and is located immediately adjacent to the established gym and outdoor fitness facilities. The proposal therefore represents a modest enhancement to the existing operation of the Golf & Country Club rather than the introduction of a new land use or the expansion of development into a previously undeveloped part of the site. It should be viewed as the continued evolution of an established leisure facility that has adapted over time to meet the changing needs and expectations of its members.
- 3.3 The relevant planning history demonstrates the long-established recreational use of the wider site and provides an important context for the current application. The proposed gym building is entirely consistent with this established pattern of development and represents a logical addition to the existing health and fitness facilities.

4.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a new detached gym building within the grounds of Cottesmore Golf & Country Club, Buchan Hill. The proposed development has been designed to provide additional indoor fitness accommodation for existing members of the Club and will operate as an extension to the established health and fitness facilities already available on site. The proposal does not represent the creation of a new leisure destination or a separate commercial enterprise but instead constitutes a modest enhancement to an established leisure complex which has evolved over many years. The development forms part of the Club's ongoing investment in improving the quality

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of facilities available to its members, ensuring that the business remains competitive and continues to provide high-quality sporting and recreational opportunities within Horsham District.

- 4.2 The proposed building has been carefully positioned immediately adjacent to the existing gym and outdoor fitness facilities, ensuring that it remains physically and functionally integrated with the wider leisure complex. The siting has been selected to make efficient use of an existing managed area of the site whilst avoiding unnecessary encroachment into the surrounding golf course or adjoining woodland. By locating the building alongside the existing fitness facilities, members will benefit from improved accessibility between the indoor and outdoor exercise areas, allowing the various elements of the health club to operate as a cohesive and complementary facility. The proposal therefore represents a logical continuation of the existing pattern of development within the leisure complex rather than an isolated building within the countryside.
- 4.3 Architecturally, the building adopts a contemporary yet understated appearance which responds positively to its woodland setting. The external elevations comprise horizontal timber cladding combined with extensive areas of glazing and a simple mono-pitched roof form. The use of natural timber ensures that the building sits comfortably within the mature landscape, whilst the restrained palette of materials allows the structure to recede visually into its surroundings. The extensive glazing provides generous levels of natural daylight within the gymnasium, creating an attractive internal environment for users whilst maintaining visual connectivity with the surrounding woodland and outdoor exercise areas. The building has been deliberately designed to avoid unnecessary architectural complexity, resulting in a simple, high-quality structure that complements the existing leisure facilities without competing visually with the surrounding natural landscape.
- 4.4 The internal accommodation has been designed as flexible open-plan gym space capable of accommodating a variety of fitness equipment and exercise activities associated with the Club's existing health and fitness operation. The additional

floorspace will enable the Club to improve the range and quality of facilities available to members whilst relieving pressure on the existing gym during peak periods. Importantly, the proposal is intended solely for the use of existing members and guests of Cottesmore Golf & Country Club and will not result in the establishment of a separate fitness business or materially alter the nature of the leisure activities already taking place within the site. Consequently, the proposal represents an enhancement of an existing recreational use rather than an intensification that would generate significantly greater levels of activity or visitor numbers.

- 4.5 One of the principal design considerations throughout the evolution of the proposal has been the protection of the mature woodland which defines the character of this part of the site. Rather than adopting conventional construction techniques requiring continuous strip foundations or substantial excavation, the proposed building will be supported upon a raised decking platform utilising a lightweight structural system. This approach has been specifically selected to minimise disturbance to the ground and significantly reduce potential impacts upon the root systems of surrounding mature trees. The raised deck construction also limits soil compaction during the construction process and enables the existing ground levels to remain largely undisturbed. The proposal therefore demonstrates that environmental considerations have been integral to the design process from the outset and that the protection of existing trees has been a primary objective in determining the construction methodology.
- 4.6 The proposal has also been designed to minimise its overall physical and visual footprint within the woodland environment. The building occupies a relatively modest area and sits comfortably beneath the existing tree canopy, where mature vegetation provides substantial natural screening from wider public viewpoints. Existing trees and planting surrounding the site will be retained, allowing the building to become assimilated within the established landscape framework. The limited scale of the development, together with the use of natural materials and sensitive siting, ensures that the proposal will preserve the attractive wooded character of this part of the Golf Club whilst providing a high-quality addition to

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the leisure facilities.

- 4.7 The development will utilise the existing vehicular access, internal road network, parking areas and pedestrian routes already serving the Golf & Country Club. No alterations are proposed to the established means of access and the proposal will not require the creation of additional parking facilities or significant new areas of hardstanding. The building has been designed to integrate seamlessly with the existing operation of the Club, making efficient use of the established infrastructure already available within the site. As a consequence, the proposal can be accommodated without placing additional pressure upon the local highway network or requiring investment in new transport infrastructure.
- 4.8 The submitted Site Plan and Proposed Elevations illustrate the relationship between the proposed building and the existing leisure complex, demonstrating that the development remains closely associated with the current gym and outdoor fitness facilities. The proposal occupies an established recreational area within the Golf Club and does not extend built development into the wider golf course or surrounding countryside. Its scale, appearance and location have all been carefully considered to ensure that the building integrates successfully with its surroundings whilst delivering meaningful improvements to the quality of facilities available to existing members. Overall, the proposal represents a modest, well-designed and environmentally sensitive addition to an established leisure destination that supports the continued success and long-term sustainability of Cottesmore Golf & Country Club.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that this should run through both plan making and decision taking. In terms of the determination of planning applications this should mean the approval of developments that accord with the development plan without delay, and that where the development plan

is silent or relevant policies are out of date, that permission be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or policies of the NPPF indicate otherwise.

- 5.2 Sustainable development is seen within the NPPF as having three roles, namely an economic, social and environmental role which should be a golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking.
- 5.3 The following sections within the NPPF (2024) are important factors in the assessment of the proposal:
- Section 11 – Making effective use of land
 - Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places

Local Plan

- 5.4 In terms of the local planning policy context for the Application Site, the adopted Development Plan for the Horsham District is composed of the following relevant documents:
- Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) – Adopted November 2015.
 - Policy 1 - Sustainable Development
 - Policy 2 – Strategic Development
 - Policy 3 – Development Hierarchy
 - Policy 32 – The Quality of New Development
 - Policy 33 – Development Principles
 - Horsham District Local Plan (2023-40) (Regulation 19)
 - Policy 1 - Sustainable Development
 - Policy 2 - Development Hierarchy
 - Policy 19 - Development Quality
 - Policy 20 – Development Principles

6.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

- 6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development and confirms that planning decisions should support proposals that contribute towards economic growth, environmental protection and social wellbeing. Paragraph 11 advises that proposals which accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay, whilst Section 6 of the Framework recognises the important role of the planning system in supporting a prosperous rural economy by enabling the sustainable growth and expansion of existing businesses. Paragraph 88 specifically encourages well-designed development that supports the continued growth of established rural enterprises.
- 6.2 These national objectives are reflected within Policy 1 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF), which seeks to deliver sustainable development through the balanced consideration of economic, environmental and social objectives, and Policy 2, which supports sustainable development that contributes positively towards the District's economy and communities. Policy 33 further requires development to integrate successfully with its surroundings whilst protecting the amenities of existing users and respecting the character of the area.
- 6.3 The proposed gym building fully accords with these strategic objectives. Cottesmore Golf & Country Club is an established leisure destination that has evolved over many years to provide golf, leisure, fitness and hospitality facilities within an attractive rural setting. The application does not seek to establish a new leisure use, nor does it introduce an independent commercial gym or materially alter the overall operation of the site. Instead, it represents a modest enhancement to the Club's existing health and fitness facilities through the provision of additional indoor exercise accommodation for existing members.
- 6.4 The proposal has been carefully positioned immediately adjacent to the existing

outdoor fitness facilities, ensuring that it remains physically and functionally integrated with the established leisure complex. The development therefore represents a logical continuation of the existing built form and makes efficient use of land already associated with recreational activities. Existing access arrangements, parking provision and servicing infrastructure remain entirely adequate, avoiding the need for additional infrastructure or significant engineering works.

- 6.5 The proposal should therefore be viewed as the continued evolution of an established leisure facility rather than isolated development within the countryside. It supports the long-term sustainability of an existing rural business whilst making efficient use of an established operational site and is fully consistent with both national planning policy and the strategic objectives of the Horsham District Planning Framework.

Economic Benefits

- 6.6 The NPPF places significant weight upon supporting economic growth and improving productivity through sustainable development. Paragraph 88 recognises that planning decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of existing businesses in rural areas through appropriately designed development that responds positively to local circumstances. The Framework acknowledges that investment within established rural enterprises plays an important role in strengthening local economies, supporting employment and maintaining the vitality of rural communities.
- 6.7 This approach is reinforced by Policy 1 of the Horsham District Planning Framework, which seeks to support sustainable economic growth, together with Policy 26, which encourages appropriate leisure and tourism development that contributes positively towards the District's economy whilst respecting environmental considerations.
- 6.8 The proposed development represents continued investment within an established leisure business that already makes an important contribution to

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Horsham District. Cottesmore Golf & Country Club provides employment opportunities, attracts visitors from across the region and supports a wide range of local suppliers and associated businesses. Continued investment in facilities is essential if leisure destinations of this nature are to remain commercially viable and capable of responding to the changing expectations of members and visitors.

- 6.9 Modern golf and country clubs increasingly rely upon high-quality fitness facilities to complement their traditional sporting offer. The proposed gym building responds directly to this changing market by increasing the capacity of the existing health club and improving the overall quality of facilities available to members. The proposal therefore supports the long-term competitiveness of the business and strengthens its ability to continue operating successfully within an increasingly competitive leisure sector.
- 6.10 The economic benefits extend beyond the immediate operation of the Club itself. Continued investment assists in safeguarding existing employment, encourages ongoing expenditure within the local economy and reinforces the role of Cottesmore Golf & Country Club as an important leisure and tourism destination within Horsham District. Importantly, these benefits are achieved without requiring additional public infrastructure or significant investment in highways or utilities, allowing sustainable economic growth to be realised through the efficient use of existing facilities.
- 6.11 Having regard to the objectives of both national and local planning policy, significant weight should therefore be afforded to the economic benefits arising from the proposal.

Health and Wellbeing

- 6.12 The promotion of healthy and active communities forms a fundamental objective of the planning system. Section 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework confirms that planning decisions should support healthy lifestyles by facilitating access to high-quality sports and recreational facilities. Paragraph 96 recognises the importance of planning in promoting social interaction, improving health

outcomes and creating opportunities for physical activity, whilst Paragraph 102 encourages the provision and enhancement of sports facilities that support active communities.

- 6.13 The Horsham District Planning Framework similarly recognises the importance of leisure and recreation in contributing towards the wellbeing of residents and visitors. Policy 1 promotes social sustainability as a key element of development, whilst the wider objectives of the Development Plan seek to ensure that recreational facilities continue to evolve in response to changing community needs.
- 6.14 The proposed gym building makes a direct contribution towards these objectives through the enhancement of the existing health club facilities at Cottesmore Golf & Country Club. The additional accommodation will provide increased capacity within the existing gym, improve operational flexibility and allow members to benefit from an enhanced range of fitness equipment and exercise opportunities throughout the year. The proposal therefore improves the quality of facilities already available rather than introducing an entirely new use.
- 6.15 The building has also been designed to maximise the relationship between indoor exercise spaces and the surrounding woodland. Large glazed openings provide generous levels of natural daylight whilst creating direct visual connections with the mature landscape beyond. This relationship between the built environment and the surrounding natural setting contributes positively towards user wellbeing and creates an attractive environment for physical activity.
- 6.16 The proposal therefore delivers clear social benefits by encouraging healthier lifestyles, supporting increased participation in physical activity and strengthening the role of Cottesmore Golf & Country Club as an established sporting and recreational destination. These benefits are fully consistent with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Horsham District Planning Framework and should be afforded significant weight in the overall planning balance.

Design and Appearance

- 6.17 Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework identifies good design as a fundamental component of sustainable development and confirms that planning decisions should ensure developments are visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and contribute positively towards their surroundings. Paragraph 135 advises that proposals should function well, add to the overall quality of an area, respond to local character and create attractive places through appropriate architecture, layout and landscaping.
- 6.18 These principles are reflected within Policy 32 of the Horsham District Planning Framework, which requires all new development to achieve a high standard of design through appropriate scale, massing, layout, materials and detailing. Policy 33 further requires development to integrate successfully with its surroundings whilst reinforcing local distinctiveness and protecting the character of the area.
- 6.19 The proposed gym building has been carefully designed to respond positively to the established character of Cottesmore Golf & Country Club and, more specifically, the mature woodland setting in which it will be located. Rather than adopting an overly dominant architectural approach, the building has been deliberately designed as a simple contemporary structure that complements the landscape without competing with it. Its modest proportions restrained architectural expression and carefully selected materials allow the surrounding woodland to remain the defining characteristic of the site.
- 6.20 Horizontal timber cladding has been selected as the principal external material due to its ability to harmonise with the colours, textures and natural appearance of the surrounding trees. Timber is entirely appropriate within this woodland context and provides a softer architectural response than more urban materials such as brick, blockwork or profiled metal cladding. As the material naturally weathers, the building will become increasingly integrated into its surroundings, further reducing its visual prominence.
- 6.21 The proposed mono-pitched roof has been chosen to provide a clean and

contemporary profile whilst minimising the overall height and mass of the building. The shallow roof form allows the structure to sit comfortably beneath the existing tree canopy, ensuring that mature trees continue to dominate views across the site. This simple roof profile also contributes towards the overall quality of the architecture without introducing unnecessary visual complexity.

- 6.22 Extensive glazing has been incorporated within the principal elevations to maximise natural daylight within the internal gym space and strengthen the relationship between the building and the surrounding woodland. These glazed elevations reduce the apparent visual mass of the building whilst creating attractive internal spaces that enhance the overall experience of users. The transparency of the design contributes to the lightweight appearance of the structure and reinforces its subordinate relationship with the landscape.
- 6.23 Overall, the proposal demonstrates a high standard of architectural design that responds directly to the characteristics of the site. It is proportionate in scale, carefully detailed and appropriate to its function, fully satisfying the objectives of both the National Planning Policy Framework and the Horsham District Planning Framework.

Landscape Character and Visual Impact

- 6.24 The National Planning Policy Framework recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and requires planning decisions to ensure that development responds sympathetically to landscape character. Paragraph 187 confirms that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by protecting valued landscapes and recognising their distinctive qualities.
- 6.25 These objectives are reflected within Policy 25 of the Horsham District Planning Framework, which seeks to conserve the character and appearance of the countryside whilst permitting development that can be accommodated without

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unacceptable harm to landscape quality. Development should respond positively to its surroundings and avoid unnecessary urbanisation of rural areas.

- 6.26 The application site occupies a discreet location within the established grounds of Cottesmore Golf & Country Club where leisure development already exists. It is important to recognise that the proposal does not introduce built development into an open or undeveloped part of the countryside but instead occupies an area immediately adjacent to the existing health club facilities that already performs a recreational function. The proposed building therefore reads as part of the established leisure complex rather than isolated development within the wider rural landscape.
- 6.27 The submitted plans and site photographs clearly demonstrate the exceptional level of natural screening that exists around the application site. Mature oak trees together with established woodland planting create a dense and attractive landscape framework that significantly limits views of the proposed building from surrounding areas. The existing tree canopy remains the dominant landscape feature and effectively contains the proposed development within the wider leisure complex.
- 6.28 Unlike many forms of development in rural locations, the proposal does not require extensive engineering operations, substantial areas of hardstanding or new access infrastructure that might otherwise alter the established character of the landscape. Existing circulation routes, parking areas and pedestrian connections remain unchanged, allowing the proposal to integrate seamlessly with the existing operation of the Golf & Country Club.
- 6.29 The modest scale of the building further reduces its visual impact. Positioned beneath the mature tree canopy and finished in natural timber cladding, the structure will appear recessive within the landscape and will not interrupt important views or detract from the overall character of the surrounding countryside. The proposal therefore preserves the established landscape character whilst delivering a modest enhancement to the existing leisure facilities.

- 6.30 It is also relevant that the proposal occupies a relatively small footprint in comparison with the extensive grounds of the Golf & Country Club. Existing woodland planting remains the dominant visual feature and the proposed building will have only a limited influence upon the wider landscape character of the site. The development has therefore been carefully balanced to provide meaningful operational improvements whilst maintaining the attractive wooded setting that defines this part of the Club.
- 6.31 Having regard to the sensitive siting, modest scale, natural materials and substantial existing screening, it is considered that the proposal gives rise to no significant adverse landscape or visual impacts and accords fully with national and local planning policy.

Trees and Arboricultural Considerations

- 6.32 The protection of mature trees has been a fundamental consideration throughout the design of the proposed development. Paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires planning decisions to recognise the contribution made by trees to the character of an area and encourages proposals that conserve and enhance the natural environment. The retention of existing trees is also central to Policy 25 of the Horsham District Planning Framework, which seeks to protect important landscape features and ensure that development responds positively to its environmental context.
- 6.33 The mature woodland surrounding the application site represents one of the defining characteristics of Cottesmore Golf & Country Club. Existing oak trees provide visual enclosure, ecological value and significant landscape interest, contributing greatly to the distinctive character of this part of the site. Recognising their importance, the proposed building has been designed specifically to minimise any potential impacts upon these established trees.

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- 6.34 Perhaps the most significant design feature is the proposed method of construction. Rather than relying upon conventional strip foundations or reinforced concrete slabs requiring extensive excavation, the building will be supported upon a raised decking platform incorporating a lightweight structural system. This construction methodology has been selected specifically to minimise disturbance to existing ground conditions and reduce potential impacts upon the root protection areas of surrounding mature trees.
- 6.35 The use of a raised deck significantly reduces excavation and allows the existing ground profile to remain largely undisturbed. Soil compaction during construction is also minimised, helping preserve the health and long-term stability of adjacent trees. The proposal therefore demonstrates that arboricultural considerations have not simply been addressed as a technical exercise but have fundamentally influenced the design of the development from its inception.
- 6.36 The proposal also avoids unnecessary removal of existing vegetation. The mature woodland remains substantially intact and continues to provide the attractive natural setting that characterises the Golf & Country Club. The building has been carefully positioned within available spaces between existing trees, allowing the landscape framework to remain the dominant feature of the site.
- 6.37 This sensitive approach represents an excellent example of development designed around existing environmental constraints. Rather than requiring the landscape to adapt to the building, the building has evolved in response to the landscape. This reflects the objectives of both national and local planning policy and demonstrates a clear commitment to protecting one of the site's most valuable environmental assets.

Biodiversity

- 6.38 The National Planning Policy Framework requires planning decisions to minimise impacts upon biodiversity and, wherever possible, secure measurable

improvements to the natural environment. Policy 31 of the Horsham District Planning Framework similarly seeks to conserve biodiversity assets and ensure that development proposals protect existing habitats whilst providing opportunities for enhancement.

- 6.39 The proposal occupies an area that already forms part of the operational leisure complex and therefore avoids unnecessary encroachment into undeveloped woodland or ecologically sensitive areas. Existing mature trees, shrubs and woodland planting surrounding the site will remain substantially unaffected by the proposed development.
- 6.40 The raised deck construction further reduces ecological disturbance by limiting excavation and preserving existing ground conditions beneath the structure. Compared with conventional construction methods, this approach significantly reduces impacts upon woodland habitats and allows existing ecological processes to continue with minimal interruption.
- 6.41 The proposal therefore represents a proportionate form of development that has been carefully designed to coexist with the site's existing environmental assets. By retaining mature woodland, minimising ground disturbance and respecting the established landscape framework, the proposal accords with the biodiversity objectives of both national and local planning policy.

Residential Amenity

- 6.42 One of the principal considerations in determining any planning application is the effect of the proposed development upon the amenities enjoyed by neighbouring occupiers. Paragraph 135(f) of the National Planning Policy Framework requires development to create places that provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. This objective is reinforced through Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework, which requires proposals to safeguard neighbouring properties from unacceptable impacts arising from overlooking, loss of privacy, overshadowing, visual dominance, noise or disturbance.

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- 6.43 The application site forms part of an established leisure complex that has operated successfully for many years and is physically separated from surrounding residential properties by extensive areas of woodland, landscaped grounds and the wider golf course. The proposed gym building occupies a discreet location adjacent to the existing health club facilities and remains well contained within the operational area of the Golf & Country Club. As a consequence, the proposal does not introduce development in close proximity to neighbouring dwellings and benefits from generous separation distances that significantly exceed those normally expected within urban environments.
- 6.44 The modest scale of the proposed building ensures that it will not appear overbearing or visually intrusive when viewed from surrounding land. Its single-storey form, limited height and sensitive positioning beneath the existing tree canopy substantially reduce its visual presence and ensure that the building remains subordinate to both the surrounding landscape and the wider leisure complex. Existing woodland provides an effective visual buffer between the proposal and neighbouring land, preventing any material impact upon outlook or visual amenity.
- 6.45 The proposed building has also been designed with careful consideration of privacy. The principal glazed elevations are orientated towards the existing leisure facilities and woodland rather than towards neighbouring properties. Given the distances involved and the extent of intervening vegetation, there is no opportunity for overlooking or loss of privacy arising from the proposal.
- 6.46 The operational use of the building is equally important. The proposal is intended solely to provide additional indoor fitness accommodation associated with the existing health club. It does not introduce activities materially different from those already taking place within the established leisure complex, nor does it extend the operational function of the Golf & Country Club beyond its existing lawful use. The proposal therefore does not generate noise, activity or disturbance beyond that which is already characteristic of the site.

- 6.47 Having regard to the modest scale of the building, its sensitive siting, generous separation distances and the established operation of the Golf & Country Club, it is concluded that the proposal gives rise to no unacceptable impacts upon neighbouring residential amenity and fully complies with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework.

Highway Safety and Access

- 6.48 The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to ensure that development provides safe and suitable access for all users whilst avoiding severe impacts upon the operation of the highway network. Paragraph 115 confirms that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or where the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 6.49 These principles are reflected within the Horsham District Planning Framework, which supports development that makes efficient use of existing transport infrastructure whilst maintaining highway safety and encouraging sustainable patterns of movement.
- 6.50 The proposed development will utilise the existing access arrangements serving Cottesmore Golf & Country Club. The established entrance, internal road network and parking areas have successfully accommodated the operation of the Golf & Country Club over many years and remain entirely suitable for the modest addition proposed as part of this application.
- 6.51 Importantly, the proposed building is intended solely to serve existing members of the Golf & Country Club rather than creating a separate commercial operation. Whilst the improved facilities may enhance the overall experience of existing members, the proposal is not expected to generate a material increase in vehicle movements beyond those already associated with the lawful operation of the site. Existing parking provision has been designed to accommodate the broader

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leisure complex and is considered sufficient to serve the proposed development without requiring expansion.

- 6.52 No alterations are proposed to the existing highway access, visibility splays or internal circulation routes. Pedestrian movement between the existing gym and the proposed building will take place entirely within the established leisure complex using existing footpaths and circulation areas. The proposal therefore makes efficient use of existing infrastructure without generating additional pressure on the surrounding highway network.
- 6.53 In light of the above, the proposal raises no highway safety concerns and fully accords with the transport objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Horsham District Planning Framework.

Sustainability

- 6.54 Achieving sustainable development lies at the heart of the planning system. The National Planning Policy Framework requires planning decisions to balance economic, social and environmental objectives, ensuring that development contributes positively towards each of these three dimensions of sustainability. Policy 1 of the Horsham District Planning Framework similarly requires proposals to demonstrate that development is sustainable in its design, operation and relationship with its surroundings.
- 6.55 The proposed gym building performs strongly against each of these objectives. Economically, it supports the continued investment and long-term viability of an established rural leisure business. Socially, it enhances opportunities for physical activity and improves the quality of recreational facilities available to existing members. Environmentally, the proposal has been specifically designed to minimise impacts upon the woodland setting through careful siting, sensitive design and an innovative construction methodology.
- 6.56 One of the most significant sustainability credentials of the proposal is the decision to construct the building upon a raised decking platform. This approach

avoids the extensive excavation normally associated with traditional strip foundations and reinforced concrete slabs, thereby reducing embodied carbon associated with construction whilst significantly limiting disturbance to existing ground conditions. The resulting structure is lightweight, efficient and capable of being accommodated within the woodland environment with minimal intervention.

- 6.57 The proposal also makes efficient use of existing infrastructure by utilising established access arrangements, parking provision and services already available within the Golf & Country Club. No additional roads, extensive hardstanding or significant engineering works are required, ensuring that the environmental footprint of the development remains exceptionally limited.
- 6.58 The use of natural timber cladding further reinforces the sustainable design approach adopted throughout the project. Timber provides a renewable external finish that responds positively to its woodland setting whilst reducing the visual impact of the building. The restrained architectural design, efficient use of materials and limited site disturbance collectively demonstrate that sustainability has informed the proposal from the earliest stages of its development.
- 6.59 Overall, the proposal represents a well-considered and environmentally responsible form of development that successfully balances operational requirements with the need to protect the environmental qualities of the site.

Overall Planning Balance

- 6.60 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the proposal has been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework together with the adopted Horsham District Planning Framework and is considered to accord fully with the relevant policy framework.
- 6.61 The assessment undertaken throughout this Planning Statement demonstrates that the proposal represents a modest and proportionate extension to an

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established leisure facility that has been carefully designed to respond positively to its woodland setting. The development supports the continued growth of an established rural business, improves the quality of recreational facilities available to existing members and contributes positively towards health, wellbeing and the local economy.

- 6.62 Equally important is the exceptionally sensitive manner in which the proposal has been designed. The building has evolved directly in response to the opportunities and constraints presented by the site, with particular emphasis placed upon protecting mature trees and preserving the attractive woodland character of the surrounding landscape. The use of a raised decking system in place of conventional foundations demonstrates a genuine commitment to minimising environmental impacts and reflects best practice in the design of development within sensitive woodland environments.
- 6.63 The proposal also makes efficient use of existing infrastructure, requiring no additional highway works, parking provision or significant engineering operations. Existing access arrangements remain entirely adequate, neighbouring residential amenity is fully protected and the proposal gives rise to no unacceptable impacts upon landscape character, biodiversity or highway safety.
- 6.64 When considered as a whole, the proposal delivers clear economic, social and environmental benefits whilst giving rise to no material planning harm. It supports investment in an established rural leisure business, enhances opportunities for recreation and healthy living, protects the site's important environmental assets and achieves a high standard of contemporary design appropriate to its woodland setting.
- 6.65 Having regard to the Development Plan when read as a whole, together with the material considerations identified within the National Planning Policy Framework, it is concluded that the proposal represents sustainable development that accords fully with national and local planning policy. There are no material planning considerations that indicate planning permission should be withheld.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that planning permission should be granted for the proposed gym building at Cottesmore Golf & Country Club.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the erection of a proposed gym building within the established grounds of Cottesmore Golf & Country Club, Buchan Hill. The proposal has been carefully developed to provide additional indoor fitness accommodation that will enhance the Club's existing health and leisure facilities whilst respecting the environmental qualities that make the site an attractive and successful leisure destination. The development forms part of the continued investment in an established rural business and represents a logical extension to the existing health club rather than the introduction of a new or unrelated land use.
- 7.2 Throughout this Planning Statement, it has been demonstrated that the proposal fully accords with the overarching objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, which seeks to achieve sustainable development by balancing economic growth, social wellbeing and environmental protection. The proposal represents an appropriate form of sustainable development that supports the continued growth of an established leisure enterprise, encourages healthier lifestyles through improved sporting and recreational facilities and has been designed to minimise its impact upon the surrounding woodland environment. These objectives are consistent with the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the Government's wider aspiration to support rural businesses and high-quality leisure infrastructure.
- 7.3 The proposal has also been assessed against the adopted Horsham District Planning Framework and has been shown to comply with the relevant policies relating to sustainable development, design quality, landscape protection, biodiversity, residential amenity and development principles. The proposed building has been carefully sited adjacent to the existing health club where it remains physically and functionally integrated with the wider leisure complex.

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Existing access arrangements, parking provision and servicing infrastructure are fully capable of accommodating the modest increase in floorspace, ensuring that the proposal makes efficient use of established facilities without requiring additional infrastructure or significant engineering works.

- 7.4 Particular attention has been given to the design of the proposed building and its relationship with the surrounding landscape. The building has been conceived as a contemporary yet understated structure that responds positively to its woodland setting through its simple architectural form, restrained proportions and the use of natural timber cladding. Extensive glazing provides generous levels of natural daylight whilst strengthening the visual relationship between the internal fitness space and the surrounding mature woodland. The building has been designed to remain subordinate to both the existing leisure complex and the established tree canopy, ensuring that the landscape continues to define the character of this part of the site.
- 7.5 One of the defining characteristics of the proposal is the environmentally sensitive construction methodology adopted from the outset of the design process. Rather than relying upon conventional strip foundations or extensive excavation, the building will be supported upon a raised decking platform specifically intended to minimise disturbance to existing ground conditions and protect the root systems of surrounding mature trees. This approach demonstrates that arboricultural considerations have fundamentally influenced the evolution of the proposal and reflects best practice for development within sensitive woodland environments. The proposal therefore not only protects the site's most valuable landscape assets but also demonstrates a genuine commitment to achieving sustainable and environmentally responsible development.
- 7.6 The assessment has further demonstrated that the proposal gives rise to no unacceptable impacts upon neighbouring residential amenity, landscape character, biodiversity or highway safety. The site benefits from substantial natural screening provided by mature woodland, ensuring that the proposed building will have a limited visual presence beyond the immediate leisure

complex. Existing circulation routes, parking areas and access arrangements remain entirely suitable, whilst the proposed use will not generate activity materially different from that already associated with the established operation of Cottesmore Golf & Country Club.

- 7.7 In addition to the absence of planning harm, the proposal delivers a range of significant public benefits that should attract substantial weight in the overall planning balance. The development supports continued private investment in an established rural leisure business, strengthens the long-term resilience of an important employer and visitor destination, enhances opportunities for sport and physical activity, promotes healthier lifestyles and improves the quality of facilities available to existing members. These benefits align closely with national and local planning objectives and reinforce the sustainability credentials of the proposal.
- 7.8 When the proposal is considered in the round, it is evident that it represents a carefully considered, proportionate and high-quality form of development that has evolved directly in response to the opportunities and constraints of the site. The building has been designed to integrate successfully within its woodland setting, preserve the environmental qualities of the surrounding landscape and enhance the continued operation of an established leisure facility without giving rise to adverse planning impacts. The proposal demonstrates an appropriate balance between environmental stewardship, economic investment and social benefit, which lies at the heart of the planning system.
- 7.9 Having regard to the Development Plan when read as a whole, together with the material considerations contained within the National Planning Policy Framework, it is concluded that the proposal constitutes sustainable development and fully accords with the objectives of national and local planning policy. There are no material planning considerations that indicate planning permission should be withheld and no identifiable adverse impacts that would significantly or demonstrably outweigh the clear benefits arising from the development.

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Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that planning permission should be granted for the proposed gym building at Cottesmore Golf & Country Club, Buchan Hill.