~ BLOCQUES ~

THE VILLAGE, ASHURST, STEYNING, WEST SUSSEX, BN44 3AP

Timber framing repairs, replacement of panel infills and installation of internal insulation.

DESIGN ACCESS STATEMENT INCORPORATING HERITAGE STATEMENT





Prepared by Roberto Prieto-Labrador MA, PCIfA ~ Reviewed by Ben Kirk MSc, IHBC

October 2024

MANORWOOD
building on tradition

ABOUT MANORWOOD

Manorwood is a small team of historic building professionals with varied skills across different areas of the historic environment.

This report has been prepared by Senior Historic Building Consultant and Researcher Roberto Prieto-Labrador and reviewed by Director Ben Kirk

Roberto holds a MA in English Building History, awarded with Distinction by the University of York. His field of expertise is domestic vernacular architecture, specialised in material culture and domestic life during the late medieval and early modern periods.

Roberto is a Practitioner member of the Chartered Institute of Archaeologists (PCIfA), as well as an Affiliate member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC). He is also a member of The Vernacular Architecture Group (VAG), The Domestic Buildings Research Group (DBRG) and the Wealden Buildings Study Group (WBSG).

As a Senior Historic Building Consultant and Researcher at Manorwood, Roberto is responsible for in depth research into building records, mapping, and physical evidence to help inform proposals and for preparing Heritage Statements and Statements of Significance to support applications for alteration or redevelopment of historic buildings and areas, as well as surveying and recording historic buildings.

Ben holds an MSc in Timber Building Conservation, completed at the Weald and Downland Museum, and validated by Bournemouth University, and is a full member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) and a recognised Historic Environment Service provider under the well-established HESPR scheme.

Ben is a member of various groups including the Vernacular Architecture Group (VAG), The Domestic Buildings Research Group (DBRG), and the Wealden Buildings Study Group (WBSG).

Ben has been actively working in the historic environment industry for 15 years on numerous heritage asset projects which include surveying of historic buildings (both domestic and agricultural), preparation of schedules of works and detailing of repairs. Ben oversees numerous applications for Planning permission and Listed Building Consent and has built solid working relationships with Conservation Officers at a number of Authorities across the South East.

As a company Director at Manorwood, Ben has overseen works to historic buildings carried out by a skilled network of sub-contractors including the timber restoration at Charleston Farm barns in Firle and the re-erection of historic buildings at the Weald and Downland Living Museum near Chichester, both which received awards from the Sussex Heritage Trust.

As a company Manorwood have provided various historic environment services to a number of Country Estates across the South East including the Lydhurst Estate, the Borde Hill Estate, the West Dean Estate and a number of projects on the Wiston Estate where Manorwood continue to provide consultancy advice on redevelopment and reuse of various areas.

Most recently Manorwood completed the sensitive restoration and conversion of the magnificent 15th century barn for Nyetimber Vineyards in West Sussex.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Manorwood 2
Table of contents 2
Introduction 3
Heritage Assets and Designations 4
Proposals 5
Historic Context 6
Assessment of Significance 10
Impact Assessment 11
Conclusion 13
Appendix: Legislation and Policy Context 14

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Roberto Prieto-Labrador MA, PCIfA on behalf of Manorwood to accompany an application relating to a proposal at Blocques, Ashurst.

1.2 Blocques is located on the east side of the B2135 road, on the northern end of the village.

1.3 The property comprises a Grade II Listed house, the older part of which dates to the 15th century. The property also includes a 20th century outbuilding to the rear of the site used for domestic storage and a 21st century garage building to the front.

1.4 The building has suffered from significant external decay due to a lack of continuous maintenance and the use of inappropriate materials. The building and particularly the timber framing are in need of conservation works to ensure the building's long-term preservation.

1.5 The property has been recently purchased by the applicants who are keen to undertake the necessary repair and conservation works to ensuring the preservation of the building.

1.6 This report, therefore, accompanies an application seeking Listed Building Consent to carried out repairs to the timber framing of the building's west elevation. Additionally, the scheme includes the replacement of some of the panel infills and the installation of internal insulation.

1.7 Historic mapping has been consulted to help understand the development of the building as its immediate environs, as well as its wider setting. The maps are included in section 4 of this report.

1.8 This Heritage Statement includes a Significance Assessment, which identifies the relative heritage value of the identified heritage assets. It also includes an Impact Assessment, which considers the potential impact of the proposed scheme on the significance of the heritage assets identified, including the contribution made by their setting. This approach to impact-assessment is required in order to satisfy the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Planning Authority.



Location of Blocques.

2.1 Blocques is a statutory Listed Building designated in November 1955 under the name Bloques Farmhouse. The listing reads:

BLOQUES FARMHOUSE

Location Ashurst, West Sussex, BN44 3AP

District Horsham (District Authority)

Date Listed 15th March 1955

List Entry No 1191892

Grade II

Description C16 L-shaped timber-framed house with plaster and red brick infilling, south front rebuilt in brick on ground floor and tile-hung above. Tiled roof. Casement windows. Chimney breast at west end of east wing. Two storeys. Two windows to each wing.



Blocques in 2024.

3 PROPOSALS

3.1 The proposal comprises a programme of repair works to the building's west elevation that the building currently requires in order to prevent further deterioration and ensure its long-term preservation.

3.2 The scheme also includes the removal of rendered modern brick infill panels and their replacement with traditional handmade brick panels, which will be re-rendered with lime render to preserve the character of the building. Any other areas of cementitious render on the west elevation will be also re-rendered with lime render. Internal insulation of the west elevation is also proposed.

3.3 Further information about the proposed works is included in the accompanying plans, should be read in conjunction with this report.

3.4 The impact of the proposals on the Listed Building is discussed in Section 6 of this report.



West elevation of Blocques.

4 HISTORIC CONTEXT

4.1 The following section provides the historical background and interpretation of Blocques based on desk-based research and an on-site survey to better understand its origin and development.

4.2 Blocques is an L-shaped, timber-framed house that evolved over three key periods. Its longest axis, running north-south, represents the earliest phase of construction. Originally, this section was a three-cell hall house, with a central two-bay open hall flanked by floored bays at the low and high ends of the structure.

4.3 The house was constructed using robust, chunky timbers for the walls and ceilings, though these lack decorative elements such as chamfers and stops. The framing creates regular, rectangular panels, which were originally infilled with wattle and daub.

4.4 The hall house likely dates from between circa 1350 and 1440, as two-bay halls began to be replaced by one-bay halls after 1440. The use of a crown post further suggests pre-1500 construction, although the simplicity of the post points to a late 14th-century or early 15th-century origin.

4.5 Today, only the central open hall of the original medieval house survives, with a single closed crown post truss still in place at the former high end of the hall. This crown post is plain, with curved braces, and shows significant evidence of smoke blackening. The truss was infilled with wattle and daub, which has partly survived and retains signs of sooting.

4.6 In the 16th century, the low end bay of the medieval hall house was removed and replaced with an end fireplace, which has since been significantly altered during the 20th century. The date '1556' is carved on the lintel inside the fireplace, suggesting the fireplace's construction date. The outer face of the lintel displays a significant number of ritual marks and apotropaic symbols. The size large size and the remnants of a former bread oven suggest this fireplace was primarily used for cooking. The oven was removed in the first half of the 20th century and replaced by a window, though a late 19th century photograph shows the oven protruding outward as a small lean-to. This same photograph also indicates that the building was originally thatched.

4.7 This chimney now occupies a central position within the building, following the addition of a two-storey, timber-framed extension at the southern end during the 1980s.

4.8 The high end bay of the original hall house was removed in the late 16th century/early 17th century, replaced by a cross-wing. This cross-wing, forming the building's shorter axis, was built with similarly chunky timbers as the medieval house. A late 19th century photograph shows some panels rendered, suggesting they were filled with wattle and daub. Unlike the medieval hall house, the joists in the cross-wing are decorated with chamfers and curved step stops. It is likely that the medieval hall was floored at this time too, as its ceiling joists feature similar decoration.

4.9 The construction of the cross-wing aligns with the period of architectural transformation in England from the 16th century onwards, which W.G. Hoskins famously described as "The Great Rebuilding." This surge in domestic improvements, driven by periods of peace,







Late C19 photograph of Blocques. Note the lean-to housing the bread oven and the surviving wattle and daub panels.





C16/C17 cross-wing now (left) and in the late C19 (right).





Date inscribed inside the fireplace (left) and curved step stop (right).

prosperity, and changing household practices, led homeowners to alter and enlarge their properties.

4.10 The cross-wing appears to have had a relatively complex layout. The ground floor was divided into two rooms: the easternmost room, heated by a large end fireplace served by a prominent stack, may have functioned as a parlour during the 17th and 18th centuries, while the unheated westernmost room likely functioned as a service or storage area. This fireplace, however, seems to have been added later, possibly during the late 17th or early 18th century.

4.11 Access to the first floor was via a dog-leg staircase from the parlour. This staircase, featuring decorative posts, remains largely intact. On the first floor, a large, heated room at the eastern end of the cross-wing served as the main bedchamber. The western end was subdivided into smaller rooms, accessed through a series of interconnected doorways. The specific use of these rooms is unclear, but they may have provided temporary accommodation for seasonal labourers or been used for storage.

4.12 The space above the former medieval hall was also subdivided into two unheated rooms, likely used for additional accommodation or storage.

4.13 The original wattle and daub panel infills appear to have been replaced with brickwork laid in stretcher bond during the 18th or early 19th century. However, as mentioned earlier, some of the original wattle and daub panels survived into the late 19th century. Much of the ground-floor framing was also replaced with brickwork, likely due to timber decay caused by its close proximity to the ground. The first floor of the south elevation of the cross-wing was clad with hanging tiles.

4.14 Historically, the building functioned as the farmhouse for a small farmstead known as Block's Farm. Early maps depict the farmstead loosely arranged around a yard, with a large barn featuring a small lean-to on one side, and a smaller L-shaped building that likely served as a stable. A large pond existed to the north of the barn and west of the farmhouse, while the northern part of the site was occupied by a large orchard.

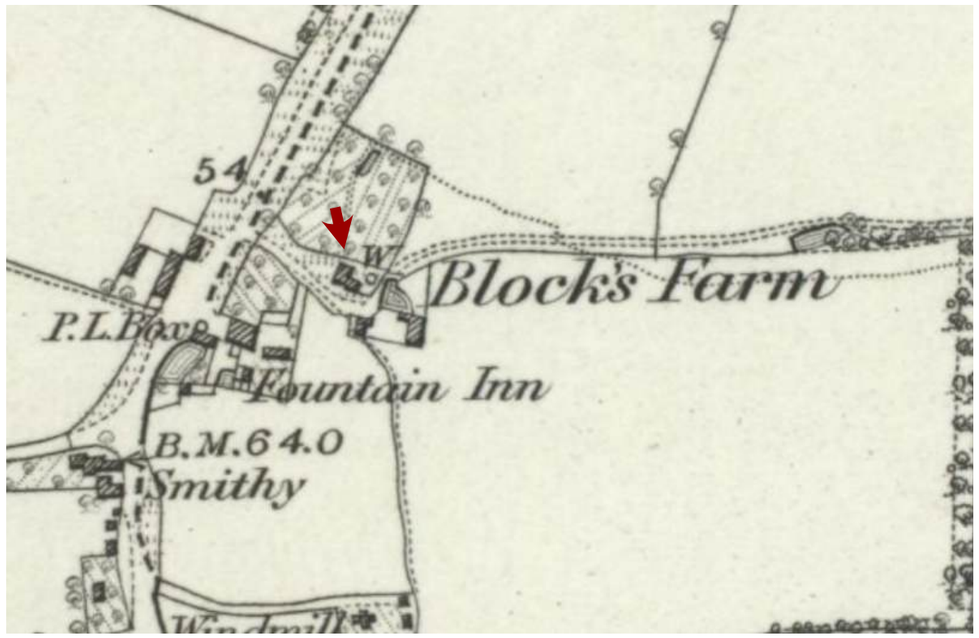
4.15 By the late 19th century, the farmhouse had been divided into two semi-detached cottages, reflecting the broader trend of adapting larger domestic buildings to meet the growing housing demand caused by rapid population growth. By this time, the large pond had been drained, possibly to make way for a road that cut across the farmstead, running eastwards.

4.16 This arrangement remained until the mid-20th century. By then, the barn had been removed, and the house had reverted to a single dwelling. The L-shaped agricultural building, the last surviving structure of the farmstead, was eventually replaced by a garage in the second half of the 20th century.

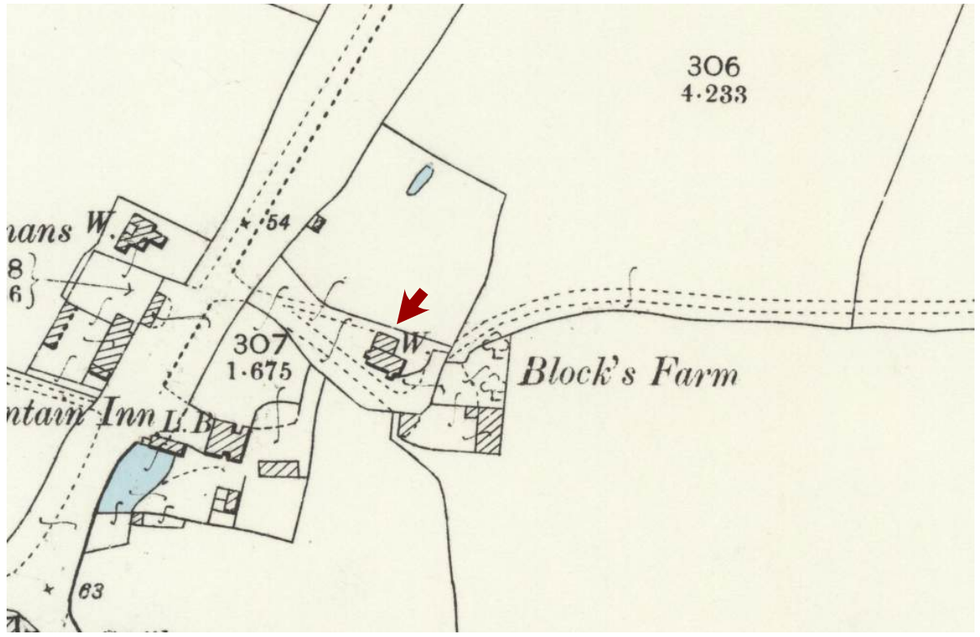
4.17 The last major alteration to the house occurred in the 1980s, when the low end of the hall, removed in the early 17th century, was reinstated as part of a two-storey, timber-framed extension.



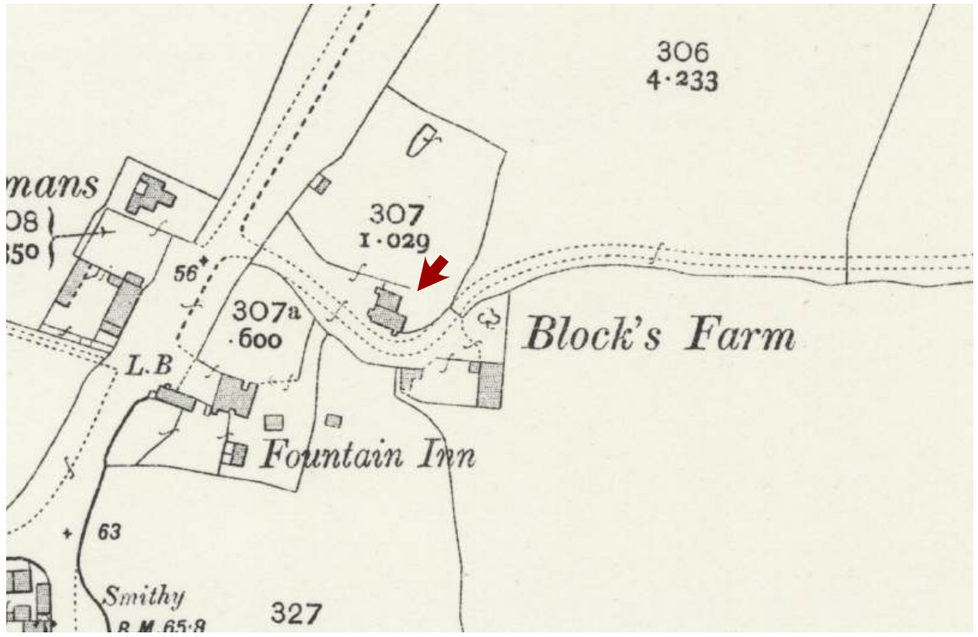
Detail of Tithe Map showing Blocques, 1844 (TheGenealogist).



Detail of Ordnance Survey showing Blocques, 1875 (National Library of Scotland).



Detail of Ordnance Survey showing Blocques, 1896 (National Library of Scotland).



Detail of Ordnance Survey showing Blocques, 1909 (National Library of Scotland).



Detail of Ordnance Survey showing Blocques, 1961 (National Library of Scotland).



Satellite View of Blocques, 2022 (© Google Earth).

MANORWOOD
building on tradition

5.1 The following is an assessment of the significance of Blocques according to the range of heritage values as outlined in Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance published by Historic England in 2008. These values are distilled under the following headings: evidential value, historical value, aesthetic value and communal value.

5.2 This assessment of significance has been used to inform the proposals in order to minimise the impact on the special interest of the building, and where possible to take opportunities to enhance its special interest.

EVIDENTIAL VALUE.

5.3 Evidential value is described by Historic England as "physical remains" and "evidence of past human activity" and is derived from one's ability to interpret the history and historic evolution of a building through visible and tangible features.

5.4 As a well-preserved medieval domestic building with a post-medieval cross wing, Blocques possesses significant evidential value.

5.5 The building is a very good example of a three-cell late 14th/early 15th century hall house with a 16th/17th century cross wing. As such, the building provides a good insight into the "domestic buildings revolution" experienced in England from the 16th century and which, W. G. Hoskins named "The Great Rebuilding".

5.6 The building retains a plethora of original features which relate to both its medieval origin such as the sooted crown post roof; and its 16th and 17th century alterations such as the cross-wing itself and the fireplaces. Particularly of interest is the fireplace with the date 1556, which replaced one of the bay ends, as well as the early 17th century staircase with decorative posts.

5.7 The variety of materials found in the building including timber, brick and wattle and daub clearly indicates changes in taste and fashion, which are usually connected with the socio-economical context of the property and the condition of its original fabric throughout the years. This is well-evidenced in the replacement of part of the ground floor framing, as well as the medieval wattle and daub with brick nogging.

5.8 The immediate and wider setting of the building has remained mostly rural. The latter is formed by a number of detached historic and modern buildings.

HISTORICAL VALUE.

5.9 Historic England considers that historic value "derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present". This is generally regarded as either illustrative value whereby the site can be perceived to represent a period in history, or associative value, where a connection with an event or person can contribute to the historic significance of a site.

5.10 As commented above, Blocques is a good example of a late medieval building of a tripartite plan form, which was extended and altered in the 16th and 17th centuries. The significant alterations and improvements to the building are intrinsically related to the architectural changes first identify by Hoskins, contributing significantly to the building's hsitorical value.

5.11 The building experienced further alterations during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Particularly important is the replacement of part of the framing and panel infills with brickwork, and the use of the building as two semi-detached cottages during the late 19th century and early 20th century. Evidence of this later use is well recorded in historic Ordnance Survey Maps (see Section 4 of this report).

5.12 Despite these changes, the original form of the building and its plan form remains largely intact and legible, and they allow for the understanding of the way in which medieval and post-medieval families lived. As such, illustrative value is arguably in the plan form and surviving features of the building. These elements represent past ways of domestic life and social habits, which contribute to the understanding of the building's socio-historic background.

5.13 The presence of several carpenter marks and apotropaic symbols visible on the surviving areas of timber framing and the fireplaces' bressummers, respectively also contribute to the historical value of the building, as they provide evidence of the building's construction as well as traditional beliefs and folklore.

AESTHETIC VALUE.

5.14 Aesthetic value according to Historic England "derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place". This value can be attributed to conscious design whether it be predetermined by an architect or the work of a craftsman and can also encompass historic and evolutionary changes to a building.

5.15 The significant aesthetic value of Blocques relies arguably on its traditional form and detailing, as well as on its semi-rural setting. The use of locally sourced materials, such as timber and brick, provides a catalogue of local materials which connects the building with its immediate environs.

5.16 The building contains a number of original internal and external features which relate to the primitive and later phases of its construction, and which provide it with a general medieval/post-medieval sense. These include, but are not limited to, the exposed timber framing (internally and externally), the surviving 17th century internal doors, the 17th century fireplaces and the carved beams.

COMMUNAL VALUE.

5.17 Communal value "derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory". This can be divided into commemorative and symbolic values, where the place may invoke emotion or contribute to an individual's or community's sense of place or social values, where a place can be a form of catalyst for memories associated with it.

5.18 Blocques does not seem to possess specific communal value, beyond the personal experiences and memories of those who occupied the house, as expected in private domestic buildings.

6.1 This section appraises the impact of the proposed works on the Grade II Listed Building known as Blocques.

REPAIR WORKS TO WEST ELEVATION

6.2 The scheme comprises a programme of repair works to the building's west elevation. Due to the poor conditon of the framing, the works were discussed and agreed in-situ with the Local Planning Authority in order to prevent the building's further deterioration. The following describe the works carried out to the west elevation:

6.3 The full assessment of the west elevation's framing by The Oak Blokes (traditional timber framing specialists) has revealed that the condition of the timbers and associated element such as windows was worse than initially expected.

6.4 This means that a larger amount of historic fabric needed to be replaced in contrast to what was expected when the building was first surveyed. Further details of the approach are illustrated in the accompanying plans, which should be read in conjunction with this report.

6.5 The applicants were aware of the significant value of the building's original framing and, therefore, the proposed scheme sought to maximise the retention of historic fabric in order to preserve the building's original character and historic value as far as possible.

6.6 The framing has also experienced a number of late 20th century unsympathetic interventions including the replacement of infill panels with modern brick and concrete breeze blocks, cementitous render and mortar and resins. These interventions have contributed to the rapid decay of the building in recent years, by trapping water against the framing and proliferating the presence of wood-boring infestation. They, therefore, needed to be reverted to prevent the further deterioration of the building.

6.7 Resin and cementitius mortar in contact with the historic framing has been carefully removed using hand tools to prevent causing further harm to the building's fabric.

6.8 The proposed works to repair the timber framing have adopted an approach of maximum retention and minimum intervention by seeking to retain historic fabric where possible and repair and reface over replacing. The poor condition of the framing, however, meant that a number of timbers needed to be entirely replaced to ensure the structural integrity of the building and its long-term preservation. Replacements have been carried out replicating the size and detailing of each indidual timber element to preserve the character of the building.

6.9 Large areas of panel infill have been replaced with modern brickwork and concrete breeze blocks and have been rendered with impervious cement render. This has further restricted evaporation and trapped moisture against the framing.

6.10 The modern panel infills have, therefore, been replaced with traditional handmade bricks laid on stretcher bond, which will be re-rendered in lime render to preserve the character of the building. Any other areas of cement render on the west elevation will be also re-render with lime render. This approach will reinstate part of the building's character whilst promoting its long-term preservation.



The west elevation before the works and examples showing its poor condition.



Examples showing the poor condition of the west elevation.




The west elevation during the works.




The west elevation during the works.

6.11 Three of the existing modern timber windows in the west elevation are heavily damaged and beyond repair. They will be replaced on a like-for-like basis matching the existing ones to preserve the character and special interest of the building.

6.12 As a whole, the removal of modern interventions which are harmful to the building such as the resin and cement render and mortar, the undertaking of repairs to the frame and the replacement of the modern panel infill with traditional brickwork are all beneficial to the building and have enhanced and reinstated its original character. Therefore, the proposal is considered to preserve and enhance the special interest of the Listed Building.

INSTALLATION OF INTERNAL INSULATION

6.13 The proposal also include the installation of internal insulation of the building's west elevation in order to improve its thermal efficiency.

6.14 The proposed insulation consists of 100% sheep wool held by a softwood framing and covered with wood-wool boards and finished with lime plaster. The installation of the internal insulation has been carried out mindful of existing detailing such as chamfer stops, so they remain visible, preserving the character and special interest of the building.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 The proposed scheme of works and improvements is based on a thorough understanding of the Listed Building, its historic development and significance and has been informed by desk-based research and on-site visits.

7.2 The proposed repair works are the minimum required to ensure the long-term maintenance of the Listed Building and the approach sought the maximum retention of historical fabric. Thus, the repair works are considered to be beneficial to the building's preservation.

7.3 The removal of modern and unsympathetic interventions and their replacement by appropriate materials such as lime mortars and handmade brickwork have contributed to the character and special interest of the Listed Building.

7.4 The installation of internal insulation is considered to be appropriate and preserve the character of the building, whilst improving its thermal efficiency.

7.5 When considered as a whole, the proposed scheme does not result in any detrimental effect or harm to the special interest of the Listed Building, as its traditional character will be preserved and, in some cases, enhanced.

7.6 The proposals are, therefore, considered to be compliant with respect to the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Horsham District's Local Plan.

APPENDIX: LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONTEXT

The primary legislation relating to Listed Buildings and their settings is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

> *Section 16(2) states "In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses."*
>
> *Section 66(1) reads: "In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses."*

In relation to development within Conservation Areas, Section 72(1) reads: "*Special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area*."

Policy relating to the historic environment is set out at national level within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Policy relating to the historic environment is set out at local level within the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF).

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

Chapter 16 (Paragraphs 195 to 214) of the NPPF updated and adopted in December 2023 constitute the Government's national guidance and policy regarding development relating to the historic environment.

The NPPF is a material consideration and states that applications are to be determined in accordance with the local framework unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment with much emphasis on "significance", defined in Annex 2 as:

> *"The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance."*

Setting is defined in Annex 2 as:

> *"The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral."*

Annex 2 defines Conservation (for heritage policy) as:

> *"The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance."*

This definition is important as it distinguishes conservation from preservation and puts an emphasis on proactively managing change rather than reactively resisting it.

LOCAL POLICY – HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

The site lies within the boundary of the Horsham District Council Authority. The Horsham District Planning Framework – Horsham District's Local Plan is the overarching planning document for Horsham district outside the South Downs National Park (SDNP) and replaces the Core Strategy and General Development Control Policies documents which were adopted in 2007. This document was adopted in November 2015 and sets out the planning strategy for the years up to 2031.

Policy 34 of the HDPF relates to the Historic Environment:

> **Policy 34 – Cultural and Heritage Assets**
>
> The Council recognises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and as such the Council will sustain and enhance its historic environment through positive management of development affecting heritage assets. Applications for such development will be required to:
>
> 1. Make reference to the significance of the asset, including drawing from research and documentation such as the West Sussex Historic Environment Record;
> 2. Reflect the current best practice guidance produced by English Heritage and Conservation Area Character Statements;
> 3. Reinforce the special character of the district's historic environment through appropriate siting, scale, form and design; including the use of traditional materials and techniques;
> 4. Make a positive contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the area, and ensuring that development in conservation areas is consistent with the special character of those areas;
> 5. Preserve, and ensure clear legibility of, locally distinctive vernacular building forms and their settings, features, fabric and materials;
> 6. Secure the viable and sustainable future of heritage assets through continued preservation by uses that are consistent with the significance of the heritage asset;
> 7. Retain and improves the setting of heritage assets, including views, public rights of way, trees and landscape features, including historic public realm features; and
> 8. Ensure appropriate archaeological research, investigation, recording and reporting of both above and below-ground archaeology, and retention where required, with any assessment provided as appropriate.

MANORWOOD
building on tradition

SURVEY & DOCUMENTS BY:

MANORWOOD

SUITE 114
26 THE HORNET
CHICHESTER
WEST SUSSEX
PO19 7BB

T: +44 (0) 1243 201102
M: +44 (0) 7725 023213

E: ENQUIRIES@MANORWOOD.CO.UK