



Comhairle Contae Chill Mhantáin Wicklow County Council

**Pleanáil, Forbairt Eacnamaíochta agus Tuaithe
Planning, Economic and Rural Development**

Áras An Chontae / County Buildings
Cill Mhantáin / Wicklow
Guthán / Tel (0404) 20148
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Rphost / Email: plandev@wicklowcoco.ie
Suíomh / Website: www.wicklow.ie

Martin and Harriet Andrews
The Old Rectory
Donard
Co. Wicklow
W91 NR28

Of December 2025

**RE: Declaration in accordance with Section 5 of the Planning & Development Acts
2000 (As Amended) -EX123/2025**

A Chara,

I enclose herewith Declaration in accordance with Article 5 (2) (A) of the Planning & Development Act 2000.

Where a Declaration is used under this Section any person issued with a Declaration under subsection (2) (a) may, on payment to An Coimisiún Pleanála of such fee as may be prescribed, refer a declaration for review by the Coimisiún within four weeks of the date of the issuing of the declaration by the Local Authority.

Is mise, le meas,

**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
PLANNING DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENT.**





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DECLARATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 5 (2) (A) OF THE PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 AS AMENDED

Applicant: Martin and Harriet Andrews

Location: The Old Rectory, Donard, Co. Wicklow

Reference Number: EX 123/2025

CHIEF EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. CE/PERD/2025/1378

A question has arisen as to whether *"the use as a Rural Retreat Centre and ancillary Self-Catering Accommodation"* at The Old Rectory, Donard, Co. Wicklow is or is not exempted development.

Having regard to:

- The details submitted with the Section 5 Declaration application, and further information received on the 4th of December 2025
- Planning Permission Register Reference PRR 95/2289, PRR 97/6307, PRR 00/2478, PRR 03/8015
- Sections 2, and 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Main Reasons with respect to Section 5 Declaration:

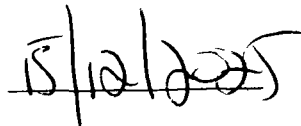
- Having regard to the history of permission for the use of the Old Rectory Donard, as a Holistic Centre with residential units.
- The current use of the Old Rectory Donard for group retreats, group events, and individual self-guided retreats, and use of residential units separately from group courses/ retreats, having regard to the nature of this use which it is considered similar to the use permitted and which would not give rise to any additional planning considerations over and above the permitted usage in terms of traffic, noise or effluent disposal, it is considered that the change of use is not material, and therefore not development having regard to the definition set out in Section 3(1)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The Planning Authority considers that "the use as a Rural Retreat Centre and ancillary Self-Catering Accommodation" at The Old Rectory, Donard, Co. Wicklow is NOT development.

Signed:


ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
PLANNING DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENT

Date:





WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT ACTS 2000 (As Amended)
SECTION 5

CHIEF EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. CE/PERD/2025/1378

Reference Number: EX 123/2025

Name of Applicant: Martin and Harriet Andrews

Nature of Application: Section 5 Referral as to whether "*the use as a Rural Retreat Centre and ancillary Self-Catering Accommodation*" is or is not development and is or is not exempted development.

Location of Subject Site: The Old Rectory, Donard, Co. Wicklow

Report from: Edel Bermingham, T/SP

With respect to the query under Section 5 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as to whether "*the use as a Rural Retreat Centre and ancillary Self-Catering Accommodation*" at The Old Rectory, Donard, Co. Wicklow is or is not exempted development within the meaning of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended)

Having regard to:

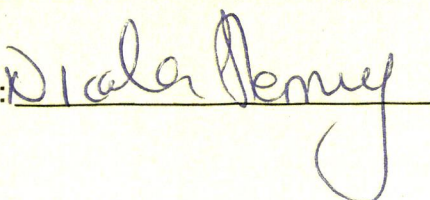
- a) The details submitted with the Section 5 Declaration application, and further information received on the 4th of December 2025
- b) Planning Permission Register Reference PRR 95/2289, PRR 97/6307, PRR 00/2478, PRR 03/8015
- c) Sections 2, and 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

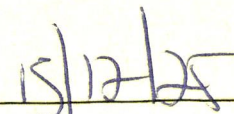
Main Reasons with respect to Section 5 Declaration:

- (i) Having regard to the history of permission for the use of the Old Rectory Donard, as a Holistic Centre with residential units.
- (ii) The current use of the Old Rectory Donard for group retreats, group events, and individual self-guided retreats, and use of residential units separately from group courses/ retreats, having regard to the nature of this use which it is considered similar to the use permitted and which would not give rise to any additional planning considerations over and above the permitted usage in terms of traffic, noise or effluent disposal, it is considered that the change of use is not material, and therefore not development having regard to the definition set out in Section 3(1)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Recommendation

The Planning Authority considers that "*the use as a Rural Retreat Centre and ancillary Self-Catering Accommodation*" at The Old Rectory, Donard, Co. Wicklow is NOT development as recommended in the planning reports.

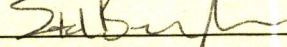
Signed: 

Date: 

ORDER:

I HEREBY DECLARE:

That "*the use as a Rural Retreat Centre and ancillary Self-Catering Accommodation*" at The Old Rectory, Donard, Co. Wicklow is NOT development within the meaning of the Planning & Development Acts 2000 (as amended).

Signed: 
T/Senior Planner

Date: 15/12/2025

Planning, Economic & Rural Development

Section 5 Declaration Application EX 123/2025

Date : 12th December 2025.

Applicant : Martin and Harriet Andrews

Address : The Old Rectory , Donard, Co. Wicklow. .

Exemption Whether or not :

Use as Rural Retreat Centre and ancillary Self Catering Accommodation

constitutes exempted development within the meaning of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000(as amended).

See previous report dated the 21st November 2025, a request for further information issued on foot of this report.

Assessment :

Item 1.

1. Having regard to the provisions of Section 5(1)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000(as amended) the following further information is requested –
 - (a) Please confirm the exact number of group retreats/ group events which took place on site in the last year. (note self-guided retreats are not considered group events).
 - (b) Please confirm the time period/ extent of the use of the various accommodation units on site as separate self catering accommodation, to that by persons involved in group events on the site, for the last year.

Response :

A response has been received indicating that the use of the facility by groups was c. 444 nights , which amounted to 49% of total usage, with weekend usage by groups at a level of 65% of occupancy. Self catering, which includes self guided retreats is at 51%, with weekend usage c. 35%. The details indicate that groups require weekends, and therefore are prioritised for weekends. It is considered that from the details the use of the facility still provides for use for courses / group retreats which is significant. In addition with respect to the self guided retreats, it could be argued that the approach, given that as stated previously, they are similar reflective/ educational stays whilst different from group activities , are aligned. Therefore whilst there has been a change in the use, it is not considered that this change would give rise to any additional planning considerations with respect to traffic, noise, effluent disposal or that the character of the use has materially altered. Therefore the change of use is not material, and therefore not development.

Recommendation :

With respect to the query under Section 5 of the Planning and Development Act 2000(as amended), as to whether

The Use as a Rural Retreat Centre and ancillary Self Catering Accommodation at The Old Rectory , Donard, Co. Wicklow.

constitutes exempted development within the meaning of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000(as amended).

The Planning Authority consider that the Use as a Rural Retreat and ancillary Self Catering Accommodation at The Old Rectory , Donard, Co. Wicklow is **NOT Development**.

Main Considerations with respect to Section 5 Declaration :

- a) The details submitted with the Section 5 Declaration application, and further information received on the 4th December 2025
- b) Planning Permission Register Reference PRR 95/2289, PRR 97/6307, PRR 00/2478, PRR 03/8015
- c) Sections 2 , and 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

Main Reasons with respect to Section 5 Declaration :

- (i) Having regard to the history of permission for the use of the Old Rectory Donard, as a Holistic Centre with residential units.
- (ii) The current use of the Old Rectory Donard for group retreats, group events, and individual self guided retreats , and use of residential units separately from group courses/ retreats, having regard to the nature of this use which it is considered similar to the use permitted and which would not give rise to any additional planning considerations over and above the permitted usage in terms of traffic , noise or effluent disposal , it is considered that the change of use is not material, and therefore not development having regard to the definition set out in Section 3(1)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

John Cunningham T/Sr

12/12/2025



**Comhairle Contae Chill Mhantáin
Wicklow County Council**

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MEMORANDUM

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

**TO: Edel Bermingham
T/Senior Planner**

**FROM: Nicola Fleming
Staff Officer**

**RE:- EX123/2025 - Declaration in accordance with Section 5 of the
Planning & Development Acts 2000 (as amended)**

I enclose herewith for your attention application for Section 5 Declaration received 12/11/2025 and further information of 04/12/2025.

The due date on this declaration is the 02/01/2026.

**Staff Officer
Planning Development & Environment**





Comhairle Contae Chill Mhantáin Wicklow County Council

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**Martin and Harriet Andrews
The Old Rectory
Donard
Co. Wicklow
W91 NR28**

8th December 2025

RE: Application for Certificate of Exemption under Section 5 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended). – EX123/2025 for Martin and Harriet Andrews, The Old Rectory, Donard, Co. Wicklow

A Chara

I wish to acknowledge receipt on 12/11/2025 details supplied by you in respect of the above Section 5 application along with Further Information received on 04/12/2025. A decision is due in respect of this application by 02/01/2026.

Mise, le meas



**Nicola Fleming
Staff Officer
Planning, Economic & Rural Development**



Martin and Harriet Andrews
The Old Rectory
Donard
Co. Wicklow
W91NR28

4 December 2025

FAO Nicola Flemming
Planning office
Wicklow County Council
County Buildings
Wicklow Town
Co. Wicklow

RECEIVED 04 DEC 2025

Subject: Application for Certificate of Exemption under Section 5 – EX123/2025

Dear Nicola,

Further to your letter of 26th November 25 we have analysed our records into the categories you have suggested to the best of our ability and set out below the information requested: -

- The total number of Group retreats / group events which took place last year, for the 12 months ending on 26th November was 29. These are bookings where the entire facility was booked as one booking.
- The total number of nights from these groups was 74 nights, an average of 2.85 nights per booking.

Below is a more detailed analysis of how these nights break down across the different accommodation units:-

	Total nights			Weekends			Week Days		
	Total nights	Group Retreat / Group Events	Self catering (including self guided retreats)	Total	Group Retreat / Group Events	Self catering (including self guided retreats)	Total	Group Retreat / Group Events	Self catering (including self guided retreats)
Chalet	144	74	70	94	58	36	50	16	34
Hermitages (2 No.)	387	148	239	196	116	80	191	32	159
Nirvana	127	74	53	90	58	32	37	16	21
Loft	176	74	102	94	58	36	82	16	66
Main house facilities - communal space / work rooms (note bedrooms currently out of commission)	74	74	0	58	58	0	16	16	0
Total	908	444	464	532	348	184	376	96	280
		49%	51%		65%	35%		26%	74%

We note that, whilst 49% of our overall bookings came from Group retreats / group bookings, 65 % of our weekend bookings came from this source.


This reflects the fact that most of the demand for Group Retreats / Group Bookings is at weekends and we prioritise these bookings. These bookings also tend to be booked

several months in advance, and we only open the accommodation up for other booking 2-3 month in advance, when we are unlikely to secure any more group bookings.

We trust this addresses the questions asked however we would very much welcome the opportunity to discuss any of this in person.

We are working in good faith with an evolving and successful business that is in keeping with the institution that we purchased in 2016. At the time of purchasing we sought professional advice and were assured that these activities were in line with the permitted use. We are very proud to have maintained and improved this special place of rest, hospitality and retreat that has been so popular with guest for almost 4 decades.

Yours faithfully,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Martin Andrews' and the signature on the right is 'Harriet Andrews'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Martin Andrews

Harriet Andrews



Comhairle Contae Chill Mhantáin Wicklow County Council

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Martin & Harriet Andrews
The Old Rectory
Donard
Co. Wicklow
W91 NR28

26th of November 2025

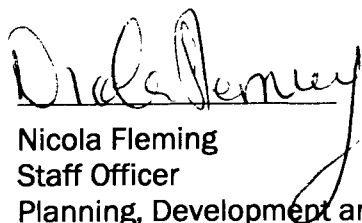
Re: Application for Certificate of Exemption under Section 5 of the Planning & development Acts 2000 (as amended) - EX123/2025

A Chara,

In respect of your query under Section 5 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) received on the 23rd of October 2025, please be advised to fully assess the Section 5 query, you are requested to submit further details concerning the proposed development, as follows:

1. Having regard to the provisions of Section 5(1)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000(as amended) the following further information is requested –
 - (a) Please confirm the exact number of group retreats/ group events which took place on site in the last year. (note self-guided retreats are not considered group events).
 - (b) Please confirm the time period/ extent of the use of the various accommodation units on site as separate self catering accommodation, to that by persons involved in group events on the site, for the last year.

Mise, le meas


Nicola Fleming
Staff Officer
Planning, Development and Environment



Section 5 Declaration Application EX 123/2025

Date : 21st November 2025.

Applicant : Martin and Harriet Andrews

Address : The Old Rectory , Donard, Co. Wicklow. .

Exemption Whether or not :

Use as Rural Retreat Centre and ancillary Self Catering Accommodation

constitutes exempted development within the meaning of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000(as amended).

Planning History :

03/ 8015 Construction of single storey lean-to sunroom extension including all necessary site works.

00/3478 Permission granted for single storey residential unit at Donaghmore, Donard.

97/6307 Permission granted for 2 no. singles storey residential units at Chrysalis Retreat Centre, Donaghmore, Donard.

Condition 2

The use of the residential units shall be used for purposes ancillary to the use of the overall development, as permitted by planning permission ref. 2289/95, and shall not be sold, let or otherwise transferred save as part of the overall development.

REASON : In the interest of proper planning and development and control of development in the area.

95/2289 Permission granted for change of use from residential to Holistic Centre including the provision and retention of alterations & extensions , provision of chalet and effluent treatment system.

Condition 2

The use of this site shall be as an institution, conducting courses, residential and otherwise, and the chalet and apartment accommodation on the site shall be used for purposes ancillary to the use of the main house, and shall not be sold let or otherwise transferred or conveyed save as part of the overall development.

REASON : *In the interest of proper planning and development and control of development in a rural area.*

Relevant legislation :

Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

“structure” means any building, structure, excavation, or other thing constructed or made on, in or under any land, or any part of a structure so defined, and—

(a) where the context so admits, includes the land on, in or under which the structure is situate, and

(b) in relation to a protected structure or proposed protected structure, includes—

- (i) the interior of the structure,
- (ii) the land lying within the curtilage of the structure,
- (iii) any other structures lying within that curtilage and their interiors, and
- (iv) all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of any structure or structures referred to in *subparagraph (i) or (iii)*;

“works” includes any act or operation of construction, excavation, demolition, extension, alteration, repair or renewal and, in relation to a protected structure or proposed protected structure, includes any act or operation involving the application or removal of plaster, paint, wallpaper, tiles or other material to or from the surfaces of the interior or exterior of a structure.

Section 3 :

3.—

(1) In this Act, except where the context otherwise requires, “development”

means—

(a) the carrying out of any works in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any land or structures situated on land, or

Section 4 :

4.—

(1) The following shall be exempted developments for the purposes of this Act—

(h) development consisting of the carrying out of works for the maintenance, improvement or other alteration of any structure, being works which affect only the interior of the structure or which do not materially affect the external appearance of the structure so as to render the appearance inconsistent with the character of the structure or of neighbouring structures;

3) A reference in this Act to exempted development shall be construed as a reference to development which is—

(a) any of the developments specified in subsection (1), or

(b) development which, having regard to any regulations under subsection (2), is exempted development for the purposes of this Act.

Assessment :

The Section 5 application seeks a declaration as to whether the use as Rural Retreat Centre and ancillary Self Catering Accommodation is or is not development .

The submission indicates that

- Property purchased in 2016.
- Indicated that the Property operates for
 - i. Group retreats fully catered
 - ii. Self guided individual retreats
 - iii. Short term self catering accommodation – intermittent ancillary use
 - iv. All Accommodation remains under unified ownership and management.

Indicated that retreats are provided by various Partners, and range from Silent retreats, stress management etc.

Also there has been a number of one-off groups conducting other activities such as chocolate making, music teaching, craft skills, mental health and well being and holistic care, also includes wider family gathering retreats where extended families gather to mark special events.

Note capacity to host more than 12-15 people is limited by the fact that some of the reception/ work rooms in the main house had fallen into disrepair under prior to ownership and had suffered flood damage. These rooms are currently being renovated.

In between organised group retreats and gatherings, individuals can book directly on the website or on other booking platforms.

Group Retreats - Institutional Use

The principal activity-hosting group retreats with facilitated courses and residential stays: -falls squarely within the definition of 'an institution conducting courses, residential and otherwise. Identical to permitted use.

Self-Guided Individual Retreats - Ancillary and De Minimis

Self-guided retreats represent an ancillary extension of the institutional ethos, providing reflective or educational stays under the same management They generate identical operational and environmental characteristics to group retreats and therefore do not amount to a material change of use.

Short-Term Self-Catering Stays - Ancillary and Intermittent

During periods when no courses are scheduled, the cottages may be let for short-term stays. This use is ancillary, seasonal, and supports ongoing maintenance and viability of the property. The physical and operational characteristics are identical to the retreat use, and accommodation remains under unified ownership and management. There is no intensification or new planning unit formed.

The details are noted. The question to be asked therefore is has there been a change of use, and is that change of use material. Permission was granted by reference to PRR 95/2289 for the change of use to use as a holistic centre, and the condition identified that the site should be used as an institution for conducting courses, residential and otherwise.

There is no definition of institution in the planning acts/ regulations , however it is identified under the Collins Dictionary that an institution is an organisation or establishment founded for a specific purpose, such as a hospital or college.

The submitted documentation indicates that the principal operation is for the hosting of group retreats with facilitated courses and residential stays, and is identical in character and impact to the authorised use under the 95 permission.

The submitted details are noted, however it is not clear from the information whether the predominant use is for individuals or for group retreats, the statement that Self-Guided Individual Retreats are institutional would not it is considered align with the permission, and it is unclear if such a use is immaterial. The supporting information is not sufficient it is considered to fully assess the question, and additional details are required.

Recommendation :

Further Information :

1. Having regard to the provisions of Section 5(1)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000(as amended) the following further information is requested –
 - (a) Please confirm the exact number of group retreats/ group events which took place on site in the last year. (note self-guided retreats are not considered group events).
 - (b) Please confirm the time period/ extent of the use of the various accommodation units on site as separate self catering accommodation, to that by persons involved in group events on the site, for the last year.

See Birmingham T/S

21/11/2025

MEMORANDUM

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

TO:	Edel Bermingham T/Senior Planner	FROM:	Aoife Kinsella Clerical Officer
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**RE:- EX123/2025 - Declaration in accordance with Section 5 of the
Planning & Development Acts 2000 (as amended)**

I enclose herewith for your attention application for Section 5 Declaration
received 12/11/2025.

The due date on this declaration is the 09/12/2025.

Aoife Kinsella

**Clerical Officer
Planning Development & Environment**



Comhairle Contae Chill Mhantáin Wicklow County Council

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**Martin and Harriet Andrews
The Old Rectory
Donard
Co. Wicklow
W91 NR28**

12TH of November 2025

RE: Application for Certificate of Exemption under Section 5 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended). – EX123/2025 for Martin and Harriet Andrews, The Old Rectory, Donard, Co. Wicklow

A Chara

I wish to acknowledge receipt on 12/11/2025 details supplied by you in respect of the above Section 5 application. A decision is due in respect of this application by 09/12/2025.

Mise, le meas

_____

**Aoife Kinsella
Clerical Officer
Planning, Economic & Rural Development**





English | Gaeilge

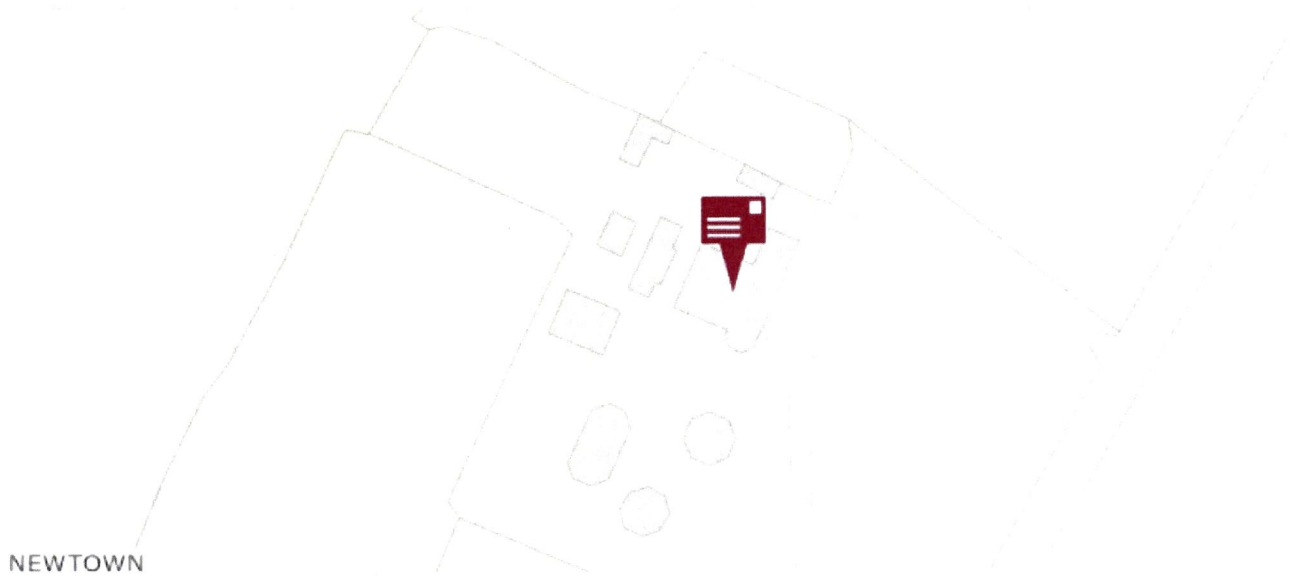
THE OLD RECTORY

DONAGHMORE

DONARD

CO. WICKLOW

W91 NR28



EIRCODE

Comhairle Contae Chill Mhantáin Wicklow County Council

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Martin and Harriet Andrews
The Old Rectory
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W91 NR28

23/10/2025

Development at: The Old Rectory Donard, Co. Wicklow

Reference Number: EX-123/2025

Section 5 Declaration: *"use as a rural retreat centre with ancillary self-catering accommodation"*

Dear Sir/Madam,

I refer to your application for a Section 5 received on the 23rd of October 2025.

We request a site location map for this application. The site layout won't suffice.
An Eircode map will suffice as site location map.

Please note we can not issue a decision date until we receive all documents.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

Aoife Kinsella

Clerical Officer

Planning, Economic and Rural Development



Martin and Harriet Andrews

The Old Rectory

Donard

Co. Wicklow

W91NR28

22 October 2025

Planning office

Wicklow County Council

County Buildings

Wicklow Town

Co. Wicklow

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

23 OCT 2025

PLANNING DEPT.

Subject: UD5891 Alleged unauthorised development at the Old Rectory Donard Co. Wicklow

Dear Sir/Madam,

Further to your correspondence of 21 June 2025, we wish to make applications under Section 5 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) in respect of the two separate issues raised therein.

We were surprised to receive your letter, as at the time of purchasing the property in 2016, we obtained professional planning advice confirming that the existing use of the property was in full compliance with the authorised planning permissions then in place. At that time, the property was being operated in a manner virtually identical to its current use. The former "Chrysalis Holistic Centre" entity had already ceased to exist, and the site had transitioned to use as a rural retreat and short-stay accommodation facility under unified ownership and management.

Since acquiring the property, we have continued to operate in good faith within what we believe to be the scope of the original permissions, while also investing significantly in the conservation, restoration, and enhancement of this historic property.

Given that the issues raised are distinct, we have prepared and now submit two separate Section 5 applications so that each matter may be considered independently and on its own merits.

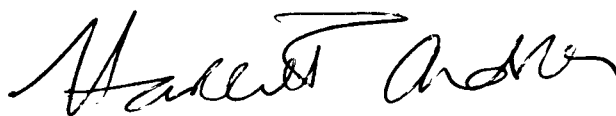
We remain fully committed to regularising and clarifying the planning status of the property and wish to cooperate fully with the Council in this regard. Should the Planning Authority have any additional queries or concerns, we would very much welcome the opportunity to meet with the responsible officer to discuss them and to receive guidance on the most appropriate way to address any outstanding matters.

We trust that the enclosed documentation will assist in the Council's assessment of the two Section 5 applications, and we look forward to your confirmation of receipt.

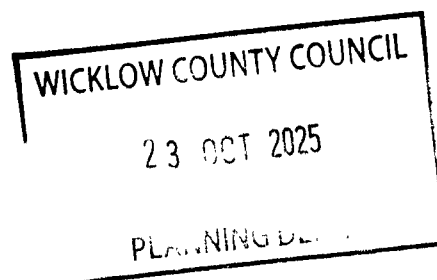
Yours faithfully,



Martin Andrews



Harriet Andrews



Wicklow County Council
County Buildings
Wicklow
0404-20100

23/10/2025 15 04 36

Receipt No L1/0/353591
***** REPRINT *****

MARTIN & HARRIET ANDREWS
THE OLD RECTORY
DONARD
CO WICKLOW

EXEMPTION CERTIFICATES	80 00
GOODS	80 00
VAT Exempt/Non-vatable	

Total	80 00 EUR
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Credit Card	80 00
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Wicklow County Council

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Date Received

23 OCT 2025

Fee Received

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

PLANNING DEPT.

APPLICATION FORM FOR A

**DECLARATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE PLANNING &
DEVELOPMENT ACTS 2000(AS AMENDED) AS TO WHAT IS OR IS NOT DEVELOPMENT
OR IS OR IS NOT EXEMPTED DEVELOPMENT**

1. Applicant Details

(a) Name of applicant: _____Martin and Harriet Andrews_____

Address of applicant: _____The Old Rectory, Donard, Co. Wicklow _____

Note Phone number and email to be filled in on separate page.

2. Agents Details (Where Applicable)

(b) Name of Agent (where applicable) _____

Address of Agent : _____

Note Phone number and email to be filled in on separate page.

3. Declaration Details

- i. Location of Development subject of Declaration _____
The Old Rectory Donard, W91NR28

- ii. Are you the owner and/or occupier of these lands at the location under i. above? Yes
No.
- iii. If 'No' to ii above, please supply the Name and Address of the Owner, and or occupier

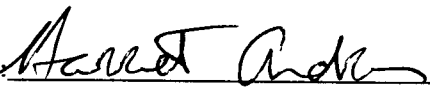
- iv. Section 5 of the Planning and Development Act provides that : If any question arises as to what, in any particular case, is or is not development and is or is not exempted development, within the meaning of this act, any person may, on payment of the prescribed fee, request in writing from the relevant planning authority a declaration on that question. You should therefore set out the query for which you seek the Section 5 Declaration _____
Use as a Rural Retreat Centre with Ancillary Self-Catering
Accommodation
- v. See attached submission for further details

Additional details may be submitted by way of separate submission.
- v. Indication of the Sections of the Planning and Development Act or Planning Regulations you consider relevant to the Declaration _____
See attached submission for further information

Additional details may be submitted by way of separate submission.
- vi. Does the Declaration relate to a Protected Structure or is it within the curtilage of a Protected Structure (or proposed protected structure) ? _____
No
- vii. List of Plans, Drawings submitted with this Declaration Application _____
Site Layout 18 October 2025

viii. Fee of € 80 Attached ? _____



Signed:  Dated : 22 October 2025

Additional Notes :

As a guide the minimum information requirements for the most common types of referrals under Section 5 are listed below :

- A. Extension to dwelling - Class 1 Part 1 of Schedule 2
- Site Location Map
 - Floor area of structure in question - whether proposed or existing.
 - Floor area of all relevant structures e.g. previous extensions.
 - Floor plans and elevations of relevant structures.
 - Site Layout Plan showing distance to boundaries, rear garden area, adjoining dwellings/structures etc.

B. Land Reclamation -

The provisions of Article 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) now applies to land reclamation, other than works to wetlands which are still governed by Schedule 2, Part 3, Class 11. Note in addition to confirmation of exemption status under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) there is a certification process with respect to land reclamation works as set out under the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Agriculture) Regulations 2011 S.I. 456 of 2011. You should therefore seek advice from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Any Section 5 Declaration should include a location map delineating the location of and exact area of lands to be reclaimed, and an indication of the character of the land.

C. Farm Structures - Class 6 -Class 10 Part 3 of Schedule 2.

- Site layout plan showing location of structure and any adjoining farm structures and any dwellings within 100m of the farm structure.
- Gross floor area of the farm structure
- Floor plan and elevational details of Farm Structure and Full details of the gross floor area of the proposed structure.
- Details of gross floor area of structures of similar type within the same farmyard complex or within 100metres of that complex.

Additional Information

Section 5 Planning Submission

Determination under Section 5 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

Use of The Old Rectory, Donard, County Wicklow

As a Rural Retreat Centre with Ancillary Self-Catering Accommodation

Executive Summary

This application seeks a declaration under Section 5 confirming that the current use of The Old Rectory, Donard, as a Rural Retreat centre hosting residential and non-residential courses with ancillary self-guided retreats and short-term self-catering accommodation is consistent with the authorised institutional use and does not constitute a material change of use.

The site continues to operate as a unified planning unit under single ownership, maintaining its institutional and heritage character without intensification.

Should the Planning Authority determine that limited short-term letting is material, it is submitted that this may be regularised by minor amendment under Section 34 with a condition controlling use and ownership.

1. Planning History and Context

Key planning permissions and relevant conditions include:

- 2289/95 – Change of use from residential to commercial Holistic Centre and construction of a chalet.

Condition 2: "The use of this site shall be as an institution conducting courses, residential and otherwise..."

- 97/6317 – Construction of two single-storey cottages ("Hermitage" and "Poustinia").

Condition 2: Units to be used ancillary to the overall development.

- 3478/00 – Single-storey residential unit ("Nirvana"). Condition 2: Units to be used ancillary to the overall development.

These permissions established and reaffirmed the lawful use of the site as an institution conducting courses, residential and otherwise, with associated accommodation to be used for ancillary purposes under single ownership and management.

2. Evolution of the Property and Current Use

Originally a Church of Ireland rectory (1711–1988), the property became a Holistic Retreat Centre (Chrysalis) from 1990 to 2008.

In 2008 Chrysalis ceased operations and was subsequently dissolved.

From 2008 to 2016 the property was run as an independent rural retreat centre with ancillary short-term accommodation.

In 2016 the property was purchased by its current owners, Martin and Harriet Andrews, who continued to operate the property as a rural retreat centre up to today.

Evolution from Holistic Retreat to Rural Retreat centre

The concept of “retreat” in Ireland in the 1990s was relatively new and evolving. Chrysalis were considered pioneers and introduced many innovative concepts.

In the early days most of the activities were group centered, and Chrysalis provided a variety of courses and workshops. All the residential accommodation was shared dormitory style and the guests participated in facilitated retreats led by trained facilitators.

Over the years the concept changed, and demand increased for quite solitary type retreats where people came to embark on more self-guided retreats. The format of the group retreats also evolved with most people requesting private ensuite accommodation even if they were attending a group retreat.

This gave rise to the development of the Poustinia, Hermitage and Nirvana cottages offering spaces where people can spend quite time.

The large dormitory type of accommodation was no longer suitable for this evolving market.

The main reason that Chrysalis ceased their activities in 2008 was that much of the property was no longer suitable for the evolving needs of the sector. They identified that the property needed to be modernised with smaller self-contained ensuite accommodation, and they were not able to raise the capital to undertake this.

Between 2008 and 2016 the property was used as a rural retreat centre and ancillary self-catering accommodation without any significant investment or modernisation. This involved either groups or individuals hiring part or all of the property and using it for a wide range of activities with an emphasis on peaceful and tranquil retreat and family-centered gatherings in nature.

Without the required investment, however the property had started to fall into disrepair.

The current owners, Martin and Harriet Andrews, purchased the property in 2016 and continued using it in the same manner.

4. Description of Current Operations

Since 2016 the current owners have resided in the staff accommodation at the property and have been gradually upgrading and modernising the property, making it more suitable for current market demands.

Work that has been carried out includes: -

- Restoration of the gardens creating peaceful and tranquil environments and sanctuary spaces.
- Modernising the kitchens and bathrooms in each unit.
- Re-roofing the main 1711 house using natural Bangor Blue slates
- Replacing the uPVC windows in the main 1711 house with hardwood sliding sash windows.
- Internal insulation of parts of the main house using natural mineral wool product and breathable lime render.

The following work is currently being carried out:-

- Installation of 24KW solar pv installation
- Upgrading the remaining insulation on the main Old Rectory house
- Installing ensuite bathrooms in the main house which will reduce the number of bedrooms from 7 to 5.

All the work has been completed to a very high standard and fully compliant with building regulations.

The property operates as follows:

1. Group retreats (fully catered) – Directly corresponds to the permitted “institution conducting courses” use.
2. Self-guided individual retreats – Ancillary variation of the institutional use, reflective and educational in nature.
3. Short-term self-catering accommodation – Intermittent, ancillary use maintaining viability between retreats.

All accommodation remains under unified ownership and management.

Group retreats are run and facilitated by several partners including: -

Partner	Type of use
Contemplative Outreach Ireland	Contemplative silent retreats
Anamcharadas	Young adult retreats and workshops
Diocese of Ferns	Strategy / management retreats

Happiness2You	Yoga retreats
Pathways Ireland	Management / strategy retreats
Wicklow Triathlon Club	Fitness and wellbeing retreats
Hospice Ethiopia	Management / strategy retreats
Godly play Ireland	Workshops and retreats
HSE	Alternative medicine workshops

These groups are typically 12-15 people and carry out a range of activities such as contemplative prayer, mindfulness, yoga, fitness training and strategic management retreats.

There have also been a number of one-off groups conducting other activities such as chocolate making, music teaching, craft skills, mental health and wellbeing, and wholistic care. This also includes wider family gathering retreats where extended families gather to mark special events.

It should be noted that the capacity to host more than 12-15 people is limited by the fact that some of the reception / work rooms in the main house had fallen into disrepair under prior ownership and had suffered flood damage. These rooms are currently being renovated.

In between organised group retreats and gatherings, individuals can book directly on the website or on other booking platforms.

3. Policy Context

The proposal aligns with the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022–2028, notably:

- Chapter 11 (Tourism & Recreation): CPO 11.1, 11.2, and 11.3 promote sustainable tourism and reuse of existing buildings in rural areas. CPO11.4 considers “places of Retreat” as part of the Tourist and Recreation sector.
- Chapter 8 (Built Heritage): CPO 8.1–8.4 encourage conservation-led reuse of heritage assets.

It also accords with the National Planning Framework (NPF), supporting rural diversification, heritage reuse, and experience-based tourism (NPOs 18a, 23, and 64).

4. Statutory Framework

Under Section 3(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, development means the carrying out of works, or the making of any material change in the use of any structures or other land. A change of use is only development if it is material in planning terms that is, if it alters the character of the use in a way that has planning consequences.

5. Planning Argument

Group Retreats – Within Authorised Institutional Use

The principal activity—hosting group retreats with facilitated courses and residential stays—falls squarely within the definition of “an institution conducting courses, residential and otherwise.” It is identical in character and impact to the authorised use under the 1995 permission.

Self-Guided Individual Retreats – Ancillary and De Minimis

Self-guided retreats represent an ancillary extension of the institutional ethos, providing reflective or educational stays under the same management. They generate identical operational and environmental characteristics to group retreats and therefore do not amount to a material change of use.

Short-Term Self-Catering Stays – Ancillary and Intermittent

During periods when no courses are scheduled, the cottages may be let for short-term stays. This use is ancillary, seasonal, and supports ongoing maintenance and viability of the property. The physical and operational characteristics are identical to the retreat use, and accommodation remains under unified ownership and management. There is no intensification or new planning unit formed.

6. Assessment Against Condition

The current operation complies fully with the intent of the historic condition:

- The principal use remains as an institution conducting courses, residential and otherwise.
- All accommodation is ancillary, under single ownership and control.
- No unit has been sold, leased, or independently let.

The unified management structure preserves the institutional character envisaged by the original permission.

7. Materiality Test

There has been no intensification, no physical works (other than conservation improvements), no change in traffic generation, and no subdivision. The site continues to function as a single planning unit. Therefore, no material change of use arises under Section 3(1).

8. Heritage and Conservation Benefits

Refurbishment has been conservation-led, using traditional materials and restoring historic features. This ensures long-term preservation of the building fabric and aligns with the County Development Plan's built-heritage objectives.

The project exemplifies adaptive reuse of heritage structures supporting sustainable rural tourism.

9. Fallback Argument (If Required)

If the Planning Authority considers that limited self-catering use constitutes a material change, it is submitted that:

- Such use is de minimis in scale, seasonal, and only when retreats are not operating;
- The physical and operational impacts mirror retreat accommodation;
- The unified ownership and management structure ensures consistent institutional character.

Any deviation could be regularised under Section 34 through an ancillary permission or condition such as:

"The self-catering units shall be used solely for short-term occupation by visitors and shall remain under single ownership and management with the retreat centre; no unit shall be sold or let separately for permanent occupation."

10. Proposed Declaration

It is respectfully requested that the Planning Authority declare under Section 5 that the current use of The Old Rectory, Donard, County Wicklow, as a rural retreat centre hosting residential and non-residential courses, with ancillary self-guided retreats and short-term self-catering accommodation, constitutes a continuation of the authorised institutional use and does not involve a material change of use requiring further planning permission.

