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By email only

Hamish Evans
Mid Sussex District Council
Oaklands
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH16 1SS

20th August 2025

Dear Mr Evans,

RE: DM/25/1218 Land adjacent to 19 Estcots Drive, East Grinstead

I am writing in respect of the above application, and on behalf of the applicant, to respond to the comments made on the proposals by your Conservation Officer, Emily Wade, on 23rd July 2025. I am the author of the Heritage Statement submitted with the application.

Without repeating the content of the Heritage Statement, there are a few points made by Ms Wade in her comments with which I disagree and to which I would like to respond.

I think Ms Wade and I are both in agreement that the positive elements of the setting of the Grade II listed Estcots Farmhouse and Barn are those aspects where a degree of rural quality is still evident, contributing to the legibility of the buildings as a former farmstead. These key aspects of setting (in that they contribute to the significance of the listed buildings and the ability to appreciate their significance) comprise the approach along the densely vegetated driveway to the former farm site; and the parkland lying north of the former farmstead, which enables an appreciation of the historic relationship between the latter and the East Court mansion.

I accept that the application site, as a domestic garden (created in the late 1920s out of a much larger historic walled farmhouse garden), reflects '*a later phase in the farmstead's narrative.*' However, and critically to this case, I do not view this as a positive phase of this narrative. It marked the beginning of the substantial fragmentation of the historic curtilage and setting of the 16th-century farmhouse, which continued throughout the mid- and into the late 20th century, increasingly detracting from rather than contributing to the buildings' significance and 'special architectural and historic interest'.

While the walled garden boundaries had largely been removed by the mid-20th century, this negative impact had been significantly compounded by 1974, by which time Estcots Drive had been laid out across most of the land encompassed by the garden and built up with houses, development which continued through the 1980s, resulting in an almost total loss of legibility of the original gardens. This impact was finally consolidated by the severance of the site itself from the listed farmhouse by its transfer into separate ownership in the 1980s and the erection of a c.2m high brick boundary wall between it and the garden area retained with the farmhouse.

Set against this background, it is clear that, while the small parcel of garden now represented by the application site has survived from the 1920s' changes, it has lost all meaningful legibility of its historic context. Thus, while I acknowledge that the site represents *'the only surviving element of the former walled garden space associated with the farmhouse,'* it no longer 'reads' as being a part of that property, and the original proportions and layout of the historic garden (most of which lies beneath the road and adjoining houses) cannot be perceived either from the site or in views towards it.

For similar reasons (i.e. the physical severance of the site from the land now associated with the listed farmhouse and its present association with No.19 Estcots Drive; the present-day context of modern housing development to either side of and opposite the site; the inability to appreciate the site in any meaningful context with the listed building; and the loss of any ability to appreciate that the site once formed a quarter of a large walled kitchen garden), it is also my opinion that the site contributes nothing to any perception on the ground of the *'evolving nature of the relationship between the farmstead and the East Court Mansion...'*

The relationship between East Court and Estcots Farmhouse is today evoked only by their intervisibility across the East Court parkland, a relationship which contributes to an appreciation of the history and significance of the farmhouse. It cannot be appreciated from Estcots Drive or from within the application site.

Ms Wade also suggests that the glimpsed views towards the roof of the listed building from Estcots Drive, although *'limited by a change in level and by intervening planting...represent the best views of the grouping from outside its immediate setting, thus contributing to a wider perception of the existence and location of the farmstead, and would potentially become significantly clearer if the dense laurel planting along the southern boundary of the current garden to the farmhouse was reduced or removed.'*

I disagree. The best views of the building are from the lane that provides access to the listed buildings. This is the primary aspect of the setting of the listed buildings, enabling an appreciation of the historic farmstead grouping despite the now separate domestic ownerships, and offering some seclusion and sense of the past rural context. The secondary important views from within its wider (but nevertheless key) setting are those available from the parkland between it and East Court.

The description of the glimpses of the roof from Estcots Drive as *'the best'* views from outside these elements of setting rather begs the question, 'the best views relative to what?' While they are possibly the *only* such views available, this does not mean they necessarily have any positive qualities in respect of contributing to the buildings' significance or the ability to appreciate it.

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I do not believe these glimpsed views enable any meaningful appreciation of the existence and location of the former farmstead (or, indeed, offer any ability to appreciate the existence of the conservation area beyond). There is certainly no perception of rural setting or quality in what is a transient glimpsed view seen in the context of a modern housing estate, which actively detracts from any such perception.

It should also be noted that the views are not just limited by '*intervening planting*', but also by a c.2m high brick boundary wall. It is true that the applicant has no control over the height and density of the laurel planting or other trees behind the wall on the farmhouse side, but the views are also currently screened/filtered by trees within the site itself and it seems unlikely that any owner of the listed building would deliberately seek to significantly reduce their own privacy by cutting down the mature laurels.

It is primarily only the laurels in the farmhouse garden (and the conifers along the site's southern and eastern boundaries) that could be said to provide an element of '*verdant foreground*' in views from the south. In public views from Estcots Drive, the high close-boarded fence and trellis along the southern boundary of the site (and the conifers), and the lower ground level within it, prevent any views of the vegetation or other features within the site itself, and when on the site one is barely aware of the presence of the listed building to the north, again because of the topography and the brick wall and laurels along the northern boundary. Verdant or otherwise, the existing vegetation does not have any rural quality; its nature is evocative of, and is seen in context with, suburban gardens.

The proposed development does preserve parts of the existing garden retaining walls, including the 1920s' terrace parallel to the later northern boundary wall, and gardens will remain on site to serve the proposed new dwellings, which will fit into the existing suburban context, while having their own unique design that will mean the plot is clearly distinct from the rest. In addition, while it is probable that the existing glimpsed views towards the roof of the listed farmhouse will no longer be available, the removal of the conifers along the eastern boundary of the site is very likely to open up new but similar glimpsed views towards the listed buildings. I do not view this as causing any harm to the significance of the listed building or to the conservation area.

I hope these comments are helpful in your determination of the application.

Yours sincerely,



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