

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

21st August 2025

Dear Mr Evans,

Land adjacent to 19 Estcots Drive, East Grinstead, West Sussex (DM/25/1218)

I write on behalf of my client, Mr Ed Harradine, in relation to the live application for two residential dwellings at the land adjacent to 19 Estcots Drive, East Grinstead (reference DM/25/1218).

This letter provides a direct response to the matters raised in your email to Laura Harris dated 7th August 2025. You noted that the Conservation Officer has identified a low level of less than substantial harm, and that you do not consider that the public benefits offered by the proposal would outweigh this harm. In addition, you provided comments regarding the design of the proposal within the context of the surrounding area. I address each matter below.

Design

You have provided comments about the design of the scheme, regarding how it relates to its surrounding context and the character of the surrounding area.

Estcots Drive contains residential dwellings of a mix of architectural styles. The images below show the existing numbers 17, 19 and 21 Estcots Drive which are adjacent to the site, and 20 Estcots Drive which is directly opposite. There is no single established house type or style on Estcots Drive as a whole, as demonstrated by these images and a review of the wider character of the street.

Figure 1 (17 Estcots Drive) and Figure 2 (19 and 21 Estcots Drive)



Figure 3 (20 Estcots Drive)



The immediately neighbouring properties on Estcots Drive are generally detached however there are examples of semi-detached dwellings in close proximity, for example at College Close c. 40m to the west of the site, and this is considered to be a wholly appropriate form of development for this location within an existing settlement.

The proposed development takes cues from the surrounding area, blending traditional design with modern touches such as dark grey timber cladding. Figure 4 below is an image of the proposed development. The design is attractive and of a very high quality, using sympathetic materials including red multi brick and clay roof tiles. The dwellings would provide spacious and high-quality family accommodation for future residents in excess of the Nationally Described Space Standards.

Figure 4 (Front Elevation of Proposed Development)



Each plot is provided with two parking spaces and Highways Authority (WSCC) has confirmed its satisfaction with the proposed parking arrangements. There is no policy requirement in the adopted or emerging Local Plan or the Mid-Sussex Design Guide for garages to be provided.

As per the requirements of the Mid-Sussex Design Guide, private outdoor amenity space is provided to each dwelling in the form of a private garden for each dwelling. Overall, the proposed design is of a very high quality, takes cues from the character of the surrounding area and would provide spacious and comfortable family accommodation.

Heritage Impact

The planning application was accompanied by a comprehensive Heritage Statement prepared by Asset Heritage Consulting. A further Heritage Response is submitted alongside this letter. For the avoidance of doubt, the applicant's position remains that:

1. The application site does not contribute to the significance (or the ability to appreciate the significance) of the listed buildings Estcots Farmhouse and Estcots Barn;
2. The application site does not contribute to the experience of the character and appearance of the conservation area; and
3. The proposed development would not result in any harm arising to the significance of any heritage asset.

This is explained in detail in the submitted Heritage Statement and Heritage Response.

However, it is noted that it is the view of the Council's Conservation Officer that the proposals would result in a low level of less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets. The applicant contends that when applying the policies set out in the NPPF and Local Plan, the public benefits outweigh the identified limited heritage harm such that the application should be approved, on the basis of the planning balance set out below.

Planning Balance

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out the approach to the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For decision taking, this means:

"Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole."

Footnote 8 of the NPPF confirms that this includes, for applications involving the provision of housing, situations where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years.

A recent appeal decision dated 2nd May 2025 (ref. APP/D3830/W/24/3350075) confirms that the Council does not have a five-year housing land supply, with the figure between 2.41 years and 3.38 years. The shortfall in five-year housing land supply is therefore significant, and consequently a significant material consideration to which substantial weight should be afforded in planning determinations on residential proposals.

The tilted balance is therefore engaged and the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies. As per paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, planning permission should therefore be granted unless:

- a) The application of policies that protect areas or assets of particular importance (in this case, heritage assets) provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- b) Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed as the NPPF as a whole.

Considering point (a), it is the Council's opinion that the proposals would result in a low level of less than substantial harm to the Grade II Listed Estcots Farmhouse and Grade II Listed Estcots Barn. Paragraph 215 of the NPPF states that:

"Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use."

The scheme will deliver the following public benefits:

- The provision of two new high-quality family homes, helping to boost the supply of new housing.
- Well-designed homes exceeding minimum space standards, providing good quality living conditions and private amenity space.
- Direct, indirect and induced jobs during the construction phase.
- New residents with spending power thereby supporting the vitality and viability of shops and services in East Grinstead and the wider District.
- Fiscal benefits including increased Council Tax receipts.
- A contribution to biodiversity equivalent to a 10% net gain.
- Sustainability benefits by virtue of the site's sustainable location in an existing settlement, in close proximity to bus stops, services and facilities. It is noted that WSCC as Highways Authority has confirmed that the site is situated in a sustainable location.

It is clear that the package of public benefits to be provided, which are commensurate with the scale of the scheme, including the delivery of two new homes which should be attributed substantial weight, would outweigh the low level of less than substantial harm to Estcots Farmhouse, Estcots Barn and the Conservation Area identified by the Conservation Officer. Therefore, there is no clear reason for refusing planning permission on the basis of NPPF policies which protect assets of particular importance.

Furthermore, there are no adverse impacts of the development which would significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole. The proposal is also in accordance with the Mid-Sussex District Plan Policy DP6 which supports development within defined built-up area boundaries (which the site lies within), particularly where this meets identified housing needs. Therefore, as per paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, planning permission should be granted.

It is noted that you suggest that due to the relatively small scale of the proposals, the public benefits would only be attributed limited weight which you consider may not outweigh the low level of less than substantial harm identified by the Conservation Officer. However, numerous appeal decisions demonstrate that the public benefits of small schemes can outweigh heritage harm, including:

- The Bell Inn, 13 Frome Road, Rode, Frome BA11 6PW (ref. APP/Q3305/W/23/3335782) - appeal for three new homes allowed 10 October 2024. The Inspector found that the proposed development would result in a low level of less than substantial harm to the Grade II Listed Bell Inn and the Rode Conservation Area. However, the Inspector found that the benefits of the proposal including the delivery of three new homes in the context of the Council's 3.3 year supply of housing, economic and sustainability benefits would outweigh the less than substantial harm identified and the appeal was allowed.
- Land to the west of Croft Lane, Carlton Husthwaite, Thirsk, YO7 2BS (ref. APP/U2750/W/24/3350480) - appeal for four self/custom build bungalows allowed 22 January 2025. The Inspector found that the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the setting and significance of the Conservation Area and the Grade II* Listed Old Hall. In this instance, the Council could demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. The Inspector found that the public benefits of the proposal including the provision of new homes, economic benefits and biodiversity net gain were substantial and outweighed the harm identified to heritage assets and the appeal was allowed.
- Grundy Farm, Carla Beck Lane, Carleton, Skipton, BD23 3DE (ref. APP/U2750/W/24/3353369) - appeal for four new homes allowed 13 March 2025. The Inspector found that the proposed development would result in less than substantial harm to the Grade II Listed Grundy Farmhouse. The Council were unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, with a supply of only 4.2 years. The Inspector found that the benefits of the proposal including its accessible location, contribution to housing delivery, and economic benefits, would outweigh the less than substantial heritage harm and the appeal was allowed.

In the context of the Council's inability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, the delivery of two new family homes in a sustainable location, which will contribute to meeting the identified shortfall in housing delivery in an existing settlement, should be attributed substantial weight.

It is the view of the applicant that the public benefits of the scheme would clearly outweigh a low level of less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets, as identified by the Council. There are no other adverse impacts of the development which would outweigh the benefits. On this basis, we ask that you re-consider your position on the acceptability of the development and that planning permission should be granted.

Yours sincerely,





Bella Tidswell
Principal Planner