

HERITAGE STATEMENT

In support of the planning application for the proposed installation of a swimming pool on the grounds of Old Beech Farm

Old Beech Farm
Staplefield Road
Cuckfield
West Sussex
RH17 5HY



ecotecture



ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

INTRODUCTION:

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the proposed installation of a swimming pool and associated pool house within the grounds of Old Beech Farm, Staplefield Road, West Sussex, RH17 5HY. The purpose of this document is to assess the heritage significance of the site and to consider the potential impact of the proposed development on the significance of the Grade II listed farmhouse, its associated Grade II listed barn, and their wider historic setting.

Old Beech Farm is a Grade II listed farmhouse, first listed on 11 May 1983 (List Entry No. 1025713), with the associated barn separately designated as a Grade II listed building (List Entry No. 1194229). Together, these buildings form an important surviving historic farmstead within the High Weald National Character Area, retaining evidence of their historic development from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries onwards. The relationship between the farmhouse, the barn and the surrounding landscape makes an important contribution to the significance of the heritage assets and their setting.



Figure 1: Existing farmhouse, kitchen extension

The proposed development comprises the installation of an outdoor swimming pool and associated pool house on an existing area of hardstanding adjacent to the existing tennis court, located to the east of the farmhouse. The proposal has been carefully designed to minimise its impact on the significance of the listed buildings and their setting through its discreet siting, sensitive landscaping and the use of sympathetic materials. The swimming pool has been positioned to complement the existing recreational facilities at the property whilst ensuring that the listed farmhouse remains the principal focus within the wider historic farmstead.

This Heritage Statement assesses the historical development and heritage significance of Old Beech Farm before considering the potential impact of the proposed development. It also provides the justification for the proposals and outlines the measures incorporated within the design to minimise harm to the significance of the heritage assets, having regard to the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and established conservation principles.

LOCATION AND SETTING:

Old Beech Farm is situated to the south of Staplefield Road, West Sussex, and is accessed via a long driveway that turns southeast towards the historic farmstead. The Grade II listed farmhouse occupies the northeastern part of the site, whilst the associated Grade II listed barn and granary are located to

the southeast. Additional structures within the farmstead include the remains of a former hovel or store, located on or near the site of a saw pit identified on the 1897 Ordnance Survey map, together with a modern bungalow positioned to the northwest of the barn.

The property lies within the High Weald National Character Area (NCA 122), a nationally distinctive landscape characterised by its dispersed pattern of historic farmsteads, irregular medieval field systems, wooded shaws and ancient routeways. Historic England's Farmstead and Landscape Statement identifies the High Weald as containing one of the highest concentrations of isolated historic farmsteads in England, many of which retain significant evidential, architectural and historic value.

Old Beech Farm occupies a characteristic dispersed farmstead within this landscape. The relationship between the farmhouse, its associated agricultural buildings and the surrounding open countryside remains readily legible and continues to illustrate the historic organisation of the farmstead. This relationship forms an important element of the significance of the designated heritage assets and contributes positively to their rural setting.

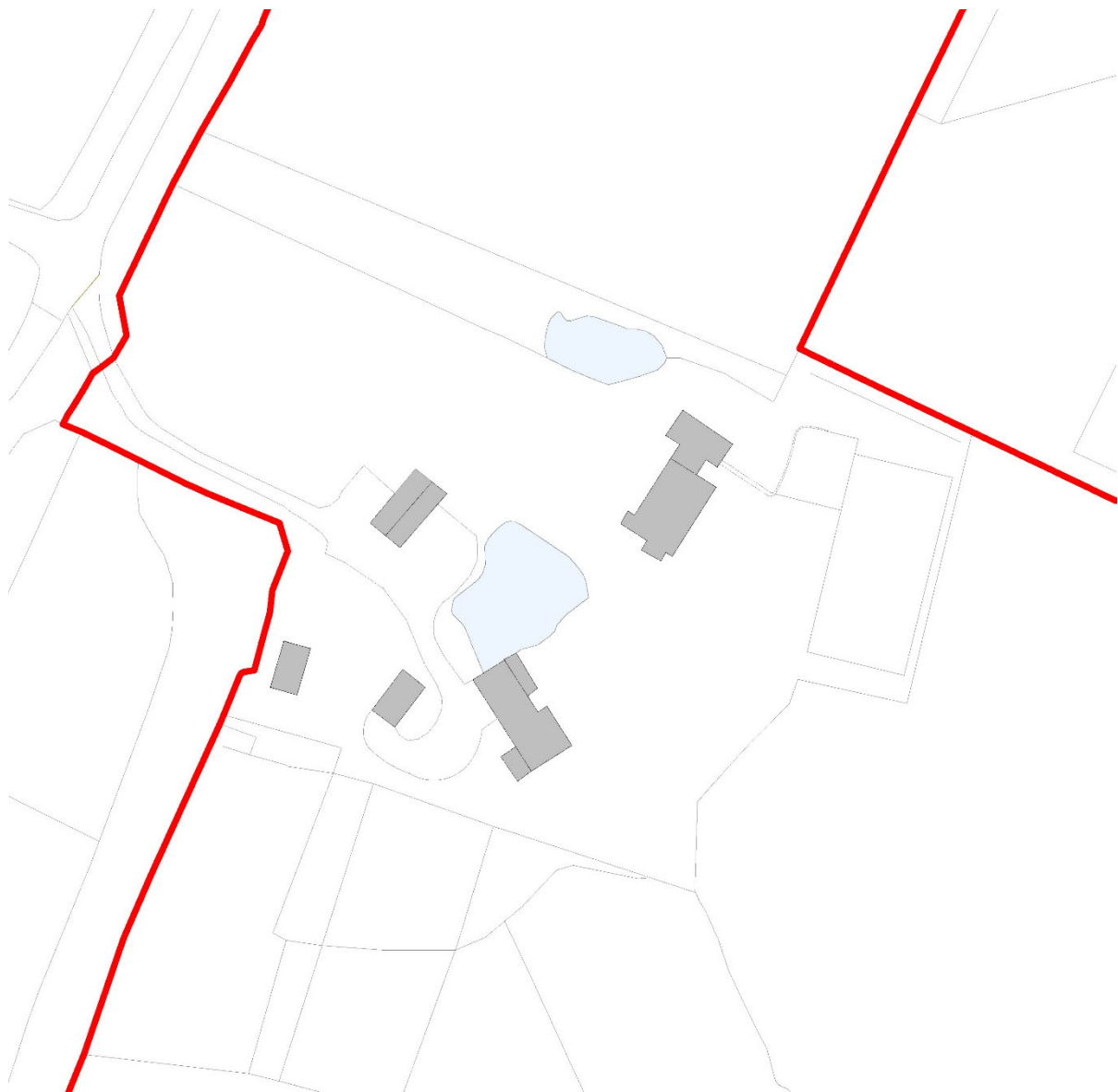


Figure 2: Existing Site Plan



Figure 3: Old Beech Farm

HISTORIC FARMSTEAD CHARACTER:

Old Beech Farm represents a well-preserved example of a dispersed High Weald farmstead. Historic mapping demonstrates that by 1843 the farm had developed a dispersed driftway layout, allowing livestock to move efficiently through the farmstead. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the complex evolved into a dispersed multi-yard arrangement, reflecting changing agricultural practices whilst retaining its historic character and spatial hierarchy.

The farmstead retains many of the defining characteristics identified within the High Weald National Character Area. These include timber-framed construction, weatherboarding, clay tile hanging, locally produced brickwork and traditional tiled roofs. Together, these materials contribute to the distinctive vernacular character of the farmstead and reinforce its strong relationship with the surrounding landscape.

Particularly significant is the survival of both the pre-1700 farmhouse and its associated barn. Historic England identifies this combination as relatively uncommon within the High Weald, with only a small proportion of historic farmsteads retaining both elements. The survival of these buildings, together with their historic relationship, considerably enhances the significance of the site as a representative example of the region's agricultural heritage.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT:

Old Beech Farm has its origins in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, with the earliest surviving part of the farmhouse dating to approximately 1610 (± 25 years). The original building comprised a timber-framed east range, which archaeological and structural evidence suggests was constructed as a high-status wing associated with an earlier building that has since been replaced. Decorative detailing, display fenestration and the surviving oversailing gable indicate that this range was intended to form part of a larger domestic complex rather than functioning as an independent dwelling.

During the eighteenth century, the farmhouse underwent significant alteration, including the underbuilding of sections of the timber frame in brick and the construction of a narrower western service range. These alterations transformed the earlier wing into the principal domestic accommodation whilst reflecting changing patterns of occupation and domestic requirements. The use of Flemish bond and Sussex bond brickwork, together with traditional clay tile hanging, demonstrates the continued evolution of the building using locally distinctive materials and construction techniques.



Figure 4: 1874 Ordnance Survey Map, Published 1879

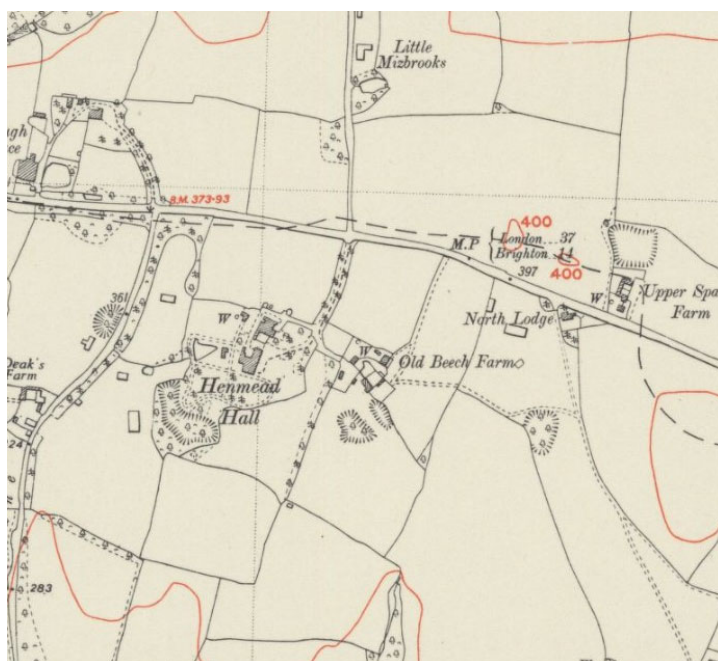


Figure 5: 1938 Ordnance Survey Map, Published 1949

Historic mapping illustrates the gradual evolution of the wider farmstead over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The 1874 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 3) shows Old Beech Farm as a small, dispersed rural farmstead centred on the farmhouse and its associated agricultural buildings, surrounded by agricultural fields and accessed from Staplefield Road via the existing driveway. The loose arrangement of buildings is characteristic of the dispersed farmsteads that define the High Weald landscape, and the relationship between the farmhouse, barn and surrounding farmland is already well established.

By the time of the 1938 Ordnance Survey map, published in 1949 (Figure 4), the overall layout of the farmstead remained largely unchanged. Whilst minor alterations and additional agricultural structures had occurred, the historic relationship between the principal farmhouse, the listed barn and the surrounding agricultural landscape remained intact. The continued survival of this dispersed arrangement demonstrates the remarkable continuity of the site's historic form and function, despite the gradual adaptation of the farmstead to meet changing agricultural practices.

More recent alterations have included the replacement of earlier twentieth-century extensions with a contemporary kitchen extension approved under planning reference DM/23/1845, which was carefully designed following consultation with

the Local Planning Authority to respect the significance of the listed building whilst accommodating modern living requirements. Although the property has inevitably evolved over time, its historic core, dispersed farmstead layout and relationship with the surrounding landscape remain readily legible, continuing to contribute positively to the significance of both the listed farmhouse and the wider farmstead setting.

DESIGNATIONS:

Old Beech Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building, first listed on 11 May 1983 (List Entry No. 1025713). The listing recognises the building's special architectural and historic interest, with particular significance attached to its surviving seventeenth-century timber-framed core, later eighteenth-century alterations, and the evidence these provide of the property's continued evolution over several centuries. As a Grade II listed building, the farmhouse is considered to be of medium heritage significance, reflecting its recognised national importance as a designated heritage asset.

The associated barn is also separately designated as a Grade II listed building (List Entry No. 1194229). Together, the farmhouse and barn form an important historic farmstead whose significance extends beyond the individual buildings to include their historic spatial relationship and their contribution to the wider rural landscape. The listing protection afforded to both



Figure 6: Old Beech Farm

buildings extends to their interiors and exteriors, together with any pre-1 July 1948 curtilage structures that contribute to their significance.

Although the site is not located within a designated Conservation Area, its rural setting within the High Weald National Character Area makes an important contribution to its significance. The surrounding agricultural landscape, historic field pattern and dispersed farmstead arrangement remain largely intact, allowing the historic relationship between the listed buildings and their landscape setting to be readily understood. This setting forms an integral part of the significance of the heritage assets and contributes positively to their architectural, historic and evidential value.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Old Beech Farm derives its heritage significance from the survival of its historic farmhouse, associated listed barn, and the wider farmstead, all of which together provide a well-preserved example of a traditional High Weald agricultural holding. The Grade II listed farmhouse retains substantial historic fabric dating from the early seventeenth century, together with later eighteenth-century alterations that illustrate its continued evolution in response to changing domestic and agricultural requirements.

The use of traditional materials, including timber framing, clay tile hanging, locally produced brickwork and handmade clay roof tiles, reflects the vernacular architecture of the High Weald and contributes significantly to the architectural character of the property.

The significance of the site extends beyond the individual listed buildings to include the historic relationship between the farmhouse, the separately listed barn and the surrounding agricultural landscape. The dispersed layout of the farmstead remains clearly legible and continues to illustrate the historic organisation of the site and its agricultural function. Historic mapping demonstrates that, despite gradual adaptation over time, the principal arrangement of the farmstead has remained remarkably consistent, allowing its historic development to be readily understood and appreciated. This continuity contributes to the evidential and historic significance of the site and reinforces its value as a surviving example of a traditional High Weald farmstead.

The wider rural setting forms an integral component of the significance of Old Beech Farm. The relationship between the listed buildings, the surrounding agricultural fields, historic routeways and the distinctive landscape of the High Weald National Character Area enhances an understanding of the site's historic function and evolution. Although the property has undergone sympathetic alterations to accommodate modern living requirements, its historic character, architectural interest and relationship with the surrounding landscape remain largely intact.



Figure 7: Area of greenery next to where the proposed pool is to be located

Overall, Old Beech Farm possesses considerable architectural, historic and evidential significance, with its heritage value deriving not only from the survival of its historic fabric but also from the continued legibility of its dispersed farmstead layout and its strong relationship with the surrounding rural landscape. These characteristics combine to create a heritage asset of recognised national importance

that makes a positive contribution to the historic environment and warrants careful consideration in relation to future development proposals.

Level of Significance	Definition of Heritage Asset
High	- Remains of inscribed international importance, such as World Heritage Sites. - Grade I and II* listed buildings - Grade I and II* Registered Parks and Gardens - Registered Battlefields - Scheduled Monuments - Non-designated archaeological assets of schedulable quality and importance
Medium	- Grade II listed buildings - Grade II listed Registered Parks and Gardens - Conservation Areas - Non-designated buildings which contribute to regional importance
Low	- Locally listed buildings - Parks and gardens of some local interest - Non-designated buildings, monuments or sites of local importance or of modest quality, including those historic townscapes with historic integrity
No Significance	- Assets identified as being of no archaeological, architectural, artistic, or historic value - Assets whose values are comprised by poor preservation, survival or contextual associations to justify inclusion into a higher grade

Table 1: Establishing the level of significance of a heritage asset (Source: *Seeing the History in the View* (2011))

As demonstrated in Table 1, Old Beech Farm is considered to be of medium heritage significance, reflecting its designation as a Grade II listed farmhouse and separately listed Grade II barn. This designation recognises the site's special architectural and historic interest at a national level.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

The proposed development comprises the installation of an outdoor swimming pool and associated pool house within the grounds of Old Beech Farm. The pool is to be located on an existing area of hardstanding adjacent to the existing tennis court, to the east of the Grade II listed farmhouse. The proposal also includes associated hard landscaping and planting designed to integrate the development into its surroundings whilst preserving the character and appearance of the historic farmstead.

The proposed location has been carefully selected to minimise the impact of the development on the significance of the listed buildings and their setting. The swimming pool is positioned within an area that has already been altered through the introduction of the tennis court and more recent domestic landscaping, avoiding direct intervention within the historic fabric of either the farmhouse or the associated listed barn. As a result, the proposal makes effective use of an existing developed part of the site rather than extending recreational development into previously undeveloped areas of the historic landscape.

The proposal has been developed with careful regard to the historic character of the site. The swimming pool has been designed to sit at a lower level within the existing landform, whilst the pool house is sunk into the existing topography of the site, allowing the surrounding landscape and established vegetation to provide natural screening. This approach reduces the visual prominence of the development and helps to ensure that the listed farmhouse remains the dominant feature within the farmstead. Additional planting and sympathetic hard landscaping will further soften the appearance of the development and reinforce its integration within the wider landscape.



Figure 8: shows the area that we are proposing the pool to be, partially hidden by a small raised bund of earth. More photographs are shown on the site plan 882 - 101



Figure 9: View through the tennis court towards the proposed location of the pool, farmhouse in the rear of the setting.

The image block contains three photographs demonstrating the use of travertine pavers. The leftmost photo shows a rectangular swimming pool with a travertine paver deck and a stone wall in the background. The middle photo shows a close-up of a travertine paver deck with a pool edge. The rightmost photo is a close-up of a travertine paver pattern, showing the characteristic diamond shape and color variations of the stone.

[illegible]

The proposal has also been designed to respect the established pattern of development across the site. By locating the swimming pool adjacent to the existing tennis court and recently approved kitchen extension, modern recreational and domestic facilities are consolidated within one area of the property. This avoids unnecessary encroachment into the wider agricultural setting and maintains the legibility of the historic farmstead, preserving the relationship between the listed farmhouse, the listed barn and the surrounding landscape.

The proposed development comprises the construction of an outdoor swimming pool and associated pool house within the grounds of Old Beech Farm, positioned on an existing area of hardstanding adjacent to the existing tennis court to the east of the Grade II listed farmhouse. The proposal has been carefully designed to minimise its impact on the significance of the designated heritage assets through its discreet location, limited scale and sensitive landscape treatment.

The proposal will not require any alteration to, or loss of, the historic fabric of either the Grade II listed farmhouse or the separately listed Grade II barn. As such, the architectural and historic significance of the listed buildings themselves will remain unchanged. The primary heritage consideration therefore relates to the effect of the proposal on the setting of the designated heritage assets and the contribution that setting makes to their overall significance.

The swimming pool is located within an area of the site that has already been influenced by modern domestic uses, including the existing tennis court and associated landscaping. By concentrating the development within an established recreational area, the proposal avoids encroachment into the more sensitive parts of the historic farmstead and preserves the wider agricultural character that contributes to the significance of the heritage assets.

Whilst the introduction of a swimming pool and pool house represents a contemporary intervention within the grounds, its visual impact has been carefully mitigated through its siting, modest scale, materiality and integration within the existing landscape. Existing vegetation, the surrounding topography and proposed planting will help to soften the appearance of the development, reducing its visibility within the wider setting. The listed farmhouse will remain the principal focal point of the site, and the historic relationship between the farmhouse, the listed barn and the surrounding rural landscape will continue to be clearly understood.



Figure 12: Grounds of Old Beech Farm

Change Rating	Description of Impact
High	Change to key elements affecting the significance of the asset's special architectural or historic interest are lost or destroyed, or the significance of the asset's setting is extensively changed.
Medium	Change to many key elements affecting the significance of the asset's special architectural or historic interest are significantly modified, or the significance of the asset's setting is noticeably different.
Low	Change to key elements are slightly altered, affecting the significance of the asset's special architectural or historic interest, or the asset's setting is slightly altered.
Minimal	Change to key elements hardly affects the significance of the asset's special architectural or historic interest, or the asset's setting is hardly affected.
No Change	The development does not affect the asset's special architectural or historic interest or change the asset's setting.

Table 2: Establishing the level of change on a heritage asset (Source: *Seeing the History in the View* (2011))

The proposal therefore results in a limited change to the setting of the designated heritage assets; however, this change is considered to be minimal and does not diminish the ability to appreciate their

architectural, historic or evidential significance. The dispersed farmstead layout, historic spatial relationships and agricultural context that underpin the significance of Old Beech Farm will remain intact, with the swimming pool reading as a discreet addition to an area of the site that has already evolved to accommodate modern domestic use.

Overall, the proposed development is considered to result in minimal impact on the significance of the Grade II listed farmhouse and Grade II listed barn through a minor change to their setting. This impact is outweighed by the sensitive siting and design of the proposal, which preserves the key characteristics that contribute to the significance of the heritage assets. Consequently, the proposal is considered to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed buildings in accordance with the statutory duty under Sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the heritage policies of the National Planning Policy Framework.

JUSTIFICATION AND MITIGATION

JUSTIFICATION AND MITIGATION:

The proposed swimming pool and pool house have been carefully designed and positioned to respond sensitively to the significance of Old Beech Farm and its associated Grade II listed barn. In selecting the location of the development, careful consideration has been given to preserving the architectural, historic and evidential significance of the designated heritage assets, together with the contribution made by their wider setting.

Rather than introducing development into an undeveloped or historically sensitive part of the site, the swimming pool has been located within an existing area of hardstanding adjacent to the established tennis court. This approach consolidates modern domestic and recreational uses within a part of the grounds that has already experienced alteration, thereby avoiding unnecessary encroachment into the more rural areas of the historic farmstead. As a result, the historic relationship between the farmhouse, listed barn and surrounding agricultural landscape remains readily appreciable.



Figure 13: Existing hardscaping where the pool is proposed to be location

The design has also sought to minimise the visual presence of the development through its modest scale, discreet siting and integration within the existing landscape. The retention of existing vegetation, together with supplementary planting where appropriate, will soften views of the proposal and ensure that it remains visually subordinate to the listed buildings. Additionally, the use of materials similar to those of the existing listed farmhouse will further aid integration of the proposal into the historic setting of the site. These measures help to preserve the character and appearance of the historic farmstead whilst allowing the property to evolve in a manner that responds to modern domestic requirements.

The proposal therefore represents a sensitive and proportionate addition to the site, enabling the continued residential use and enjoyment of Old Beech Farm whilst respecting the special architectural and historic interest of the designated heritage assets. The design approach has sought to minimise any impact on their setting and to ensure that the qualities which contribute to their significance remain clearly legible.

CONCLUSION:

This Heritage Statement has assessed the significance of Old Beech Farm and the potential impact of the proposed swimming pool and pool house on the Grade II listed farmhouse, the separately listed Grade II barn and their setting. The assessment concludes that the proposal will not result in any loss of historic fabric and that its effect on the setting of the designated heritage assets will be minimal, owing to its careful siting within an existing area of domestic use, its modest scale and the incorporation of sensitive landscaping.

The overall significance of Old Beech Farm has been assessed as medium, reflecting the national importance of the Grade II listed buildings and the contribution made by their historic farmstead setting. When this level of significance is considered alongside the minimal level of impact identified through the heritage assessment, Table 3 demonstrates that the proposal results in an overall minor impact on the heritage asset. This level of impact is considered acceptable and does not adversely affect the ability to understand or appreciate the significance of the designated heritage assets.

Significance of Asset	Level of Change				
	No Change	Minimal	Low	Medium	High
High	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Major
Medium	Negligible	Minor	Minor	Moderate	Major
Low	Negligible	Negligible	Minor	Minor	Moderate
Not Significant	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Table 3: Matrix for establishing the level of impact against the asset's significance (Source: *Seeing the History in the View* (2011))

Accordingly, the proposed development is considered to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed buildings and their setting, satisfying the statutory duties under Sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Furthermore, the proposal accords with the relevant heritage policies of the National Planning Policy Framework by conserving the significance of the designated heritage assets whilst allowing for their continued sustainable use. It is therefore considered that the proposal can be supported on heritage grounds.