

Heritage Statement

Executive Summary

This Heritage Statement accompanies planning application **DM/25/2374** for the erection of a timber fence atop a gabion wall along the rear boundary of the site.

The site is located adjacent to the **Escots and East Court Conservation Area** and neighbouring **Escots Farmhouse (Grade II Listed Building)**. The proposal relates solely to a private rear boundary and does not affect principal elevations, key views, or the public realm.

The proposed boundary treatment comprises a light-coloured timber fence, consistent with neighbouring properties, positioned above a high-quality gabion wall. This solution is materially more sympathetic than the concrete block boundary walls present along the same boundary.

The proposal has been assessed against the statutory duties under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is concluded that the development would result in **no harm** to the significance of the Escots and East Court Conservation Area or Escots Farmhouse. Alternatively, any impact would fall at the **lowest end of less than substantial harm**, and would be comfortably outweighed by the high-quality and sympathetic design of the proposal.

Planning Application Reference: DM/25/2374

Proposal: Erection of a timber fence atop a gabion wall to the rear boundary

Site Context: Adjacent to Escots and East Court Conservation Area and neighbouring Escots Farmhouse (Listed Building)

1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of the above planning application and has been submitted to satisfy the local planning authority's validation requirements. The statement has been prepared in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and relevant planning practice guidance.

The purpose of this statement is to identify the relevant heritage assets, describe their significance insofar as it is affected by the proposal, and assess the impact of the proposed development on that significance.

2. Site and Heritage Context

The application site lies adjacent to the **Escots and East Court Conservation Area**. In addition, the neighbouring property, **Escots Farmhouse (List Entry Number 1248766)**, is a Listed Building. As such, the application site may be considered to fall within the *setting* of a designated heritage asset for the purposes of Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The proposal relates solely to the **rear boundary** of the site, which is not publicly accessible and has limited intervisibility with the wider Conservation Area or the principal elevations of Escots Farmhouse.

3. Significance of the Heritage Assets

3.1 Escots and East Court Conservation Area

The significance of the Escots and East Court Conservation Area derives from its historic rural character, traditional built form, and cohesive appearance of development, often defined by natural or traditional boundary treatments.

Boundary treatments within and adjacent to the Conservation Area vary and include hedging, timber fencing, masonry walls, and modern interventions. The rear boundaries of properties are generally of lower heritage sensitivity than principal frontages or public realm interfaces.

3.2 Escots Farmhouse (Listed Building)

Escots Farmhouse is a designated heritage asset of special architectural and historic interest. Its significance primarily derives from its historic fabric, form, and setting within a rural context.

The contribution made by the application site to the significance of Escots Farmhouse is limited, given the separation distance, the location of the proposal to a rear boundary, and the presence of existing boundary treatments and intervening features.

4. Description of the Proposal

The proposal comprises a **light-coloured timber fence** erected on top of a **gabion wall** along the rear boundary of the site.

The timber fence is of a type, scale, and appearance consistent with fencing found on neighbouring properties backing onto the same boundary. The gabion wall provides a visually permeable and textured base that is sympathetic in appearance and clearly more considered in design than alternative boundary treatments present nearby.

Notably, neighbouring fences along the same boundary are often supported by **concrete block walls**, which are utilitarian in appearance and offer little in terms of visual or heritage sensitivity.

5. Assessment of Impact on Heritage Significance

5.1 Fallback Position and Relevant Planning History

It is material to note that planning permission has previously been granted under reference **DM/22/3740** for the removal of a conservatory and the erection of a part single-storey and part two-storey rear and side extension at the site.

That permission related to a development of significantly greater scale, massing, and visual presence than the current proposal. The approved scheme was expressly assessed by the Local Planning Authority in terms of its impact on the **Escots and East Court Conservation Area** and the **setting of Escots Farmhouse (Listed Building)**.

The Officer's Report for DM/22/3740 concluded that the approved extensions would preserve the setting of the adjacent heritage assets and would result in no unacceptable heritage harm. In reaching that conclusion, the Local Planning Authority accepted that the site occupies a position of limited heritage sensitivity, particularly in respect of rear boundary and private domestic interventions.

By comparison, the current proposal for a modest rear boundary fence and gabion wall is demonstrably minor in scale and impact, and would have a far lesser bearing on the significance or appreciation of the Conservation Area or the Listed Building than the previously approved extensions.

In accordance with paragraph 205 of the NPPF, great weight has been given to the conservation of designated heritage assets.

The proposed fence and gabion wall are modest in scale, located to a private rear boundary, and will not interrupt key views, vistas, or the setting of Escots Farmhouse in any meaningful way. The materials proposed are appropriate and subdued, with the timber fence reflecting common boundary treatments in the locality.

The gabion wall is considered to be a **high-quality and sympathetic solution**, particularly when compared to the concrete block walls supporting neighbouring fencing. As such, the proposal represents an enhancement in terms of material quality and design coherence.

Given the above, the development would result in **no harm** to the significance of the Escots and East Court Conservation Area or Escots Farmhouse. Alternatively, if any impact is identified, it would fall firmly within the category of **less than substantial harm** at the lowest end of the spectrum, as defined by the NPPF.

6. Planning Balance and Justification

Paragraph 208 of the NPPF requires that where a development proposal would 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.

In this instance, the proposal delivers the following benefits: - A high-quality and visually sympathetic boundary treatment; - A material improvement over existing and neighbouring concrete block boundary solutions; - A design that respects local character and established boundary treatments; - No adverse impact on public views or heritage significance.

These considerations weigh decisively in favour of the proposal.

7. Conclusion

This Heritage Statement demonstrates that the proposed timber fence and gabion wall will preserve the setting of the Escots and East Court Conservation Area and Escots Farmhouse (Listed Building).

The proposal has been carefully designed to be sympathetic in scale, material, and appearance, and represents a more considered and appropriate boundary treatment than those present on neighbouring properties.

It is therefore concluded that the development results in **no harm**, or at worst **less than substantial harm**, to the significance of designated heritage assets, and fully accords with the aims of the NPPF and relevant heritage legislation.