

SUMMARY FOR PROOF OF EVIDENCE ON BEHALF OF THE APPELLANT: HERITAGE MATTERS

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LAND AT BIRD-IN-EYE FARM

JUNE 2025



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SUMMARY

1 I appear on behalf of the Appellant in this matter, and to provide expert evidence treating the impact of the proposals on the grade II listed oast house. Harm to this early C19 structure is identified in Putative Reason for Refusal 2.

2 My main evidence sets out my qualifications and experience over nearly 35 years advising on development and the historic environment.

3 I am a chartered planner and member of the IHBC, and have a doctorate in the history of architecture and urban planning.

4 In 1991, after completing my degree, I joined English Heritage (as was) as a listing or designations advisor and then providing research to support its statutory role. I joined private practice in 1998 and qualified as a town planner whilst a director at Alan Baxter and Associates. I joined Montagu Evans as a partner in 2005 and here I have built a large specialist team. I became a senior and owning partner in 2010.

5 **Appendix 1.0** comprises a CV with a list of academic and professional publications.

6 My main evidence explains that I was instructed to review the previous scheme following its dismissal at the last Appeal.

7 My instruction invited me to review those earlier proposals and to advise what changes could be made to the masterplan layout to address the Inspector’s finding of less than substantial harm (with which finding I agreed).

8 Accordingly, I and a colleague worked with the design and landscape team on a new layout. My colleague, Mr Paul Kessler-Lyne (his CV is included at **Appendix 2.0**) attended a pre app and we then advised on further changes to the scheme, which is the one that is before the Inspector on the present Appeal. We were then instructed to prepare the heritage impact assessment supporting the application. I reviewed that document.

9 My work as an expert at this Appeal was subject to a further instruction.

10 This scheme maintains a large area of open land west of the listed oast house.

11 The red line boundary to include land around the oast house and to include for that land’s enhancement, improving the setting of the listed building. This extension of the works was on my advice.

12 My main evidence explains the history and significance of the listed building, and that understanding will not be in dispute. The oast house is a familiar building type in this region. Typically they are round in plan, but many are square. Whilst the building has been altered to some extent, it retains a significant amount of early 19th century fabric and in particular those parts which have technical interest (relating to a novel method of drying).

13 Likewise, the Council’s witness and I will agree that the open character of the land (grazed by horses) contributes to the significance of the oast house, a building closely tied to the arable farming activities of this land holding. The immediate setting of the oast is the former farmyard; some older buildings are recognisably historic farm buildings, though they are too altered to be of listable quality or to be treated as non-designated heritage assets.

14 The farm expanded in the 20th century with larger agricultural barns and sheds. The complex is today a small business centre.

15 The oast’s immediate setting has changed.

16 Likewise, the isolated position of the old farmstead (including the oast) has been eroded by the growth of Uckfield, whose edge is now clearly visible below the listed building.

17 I consider that the amount of land that is left open in the present proposals is sufficient to preserve the setting of the listed building, enabling one to appreciate its historic setting. The housing has been positioned to maintain clear views across that land from the oast. Likewise, it will continue to be appreciated across open land from those limited positions to the west (from within the new housing development, for example) from where the historic building’s distinctive cowl can be appreciated.

18 The use of the land will change but I am advised that the landscape management for the new publicly accessible land will not be highly managed, amenity grassland. It will have a more natural treatment that can be attractive, having as well a rustic quality that can complement an old farm building. There will be a new footpath across this land which will enable an appreciation of the listed oast house across open land. One would be aware of the housing, but it will be set well back.

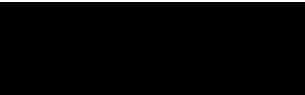
19 Therefore, the setting of the listed building will be improved around it and public appreciation of it will be enhanced.

20 I have considered the potential impact of the new junction enabling site access. This is separated back from the listed building.

21 I have also reviewed the associated lighting scheme and the light spill diagram. This shows that the area illuminated for the road is set away from the listed building. That taken together with the position of the junction leads me to conclude that the lighting will not result in the urbanisation of the building’s setting. In any event, at present the listed building is not appreciable at night.

22 For these reasons, then, my evidence concludes the setting of the listed building is preserved and in some respects enhanced. The ability to appreciate the oast’s historic interest and its architectural form is maintained.

23 Finally, I comment on the Council’s allegation of harm to setting through change to views as seen from the external stair of the oast. I understand from my research that these structures had external stairs which were needed for their functioning. The present stair is not original though it is likely in its original location. The housing proposed would be more visible than from the base of the listed building, but then so would more of Uckfield. In any event, a stair is an area one passes through and access is limited. The view will include the land left open west of the listed building.

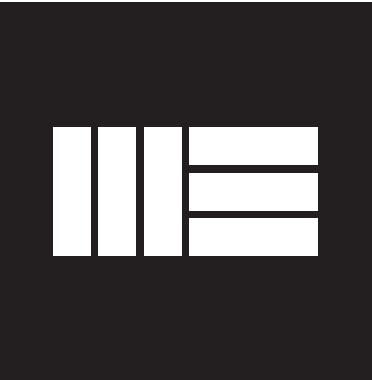
Signed 

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