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Dear Sir/Madam,

Ref: 24/02167/FP Erection of one detached 3-bed dwelling with parking and landscaping with new vehicular and pedestrian accesses onto Mill Lane following demolition of existing outbuilding. Old Generator House, Mill Lane, Hexton, Hertfordshire, SG5 3JE

We are grateful for the opportunity to comment on this application, which has a material impact on the significance of Hexton Manor Registered by Historic England at Grade II. The inclusion of these sites on this statutory register requires great weight to be given to its conservation.

Thank you for consulting the Gardens Trust (GT) in its role as Statutory Consultee with regard to proposed development affecting sites included by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England, as per the above application. This response is made jointly by The Gardens Trust and Hertfordshire Gardens Trust.

The Registered Park and Garden (RPG) of Hexton Manor contains elements of nineteenth century formal gardens, surrounded by earlier pleasure grounds and a landscaped park. The RPG itself is closely associated to the village of Hexton, which highlights the historic link between principal house and landscape and the village that served the estate. The village thereby constitutes an important aspect in the setting of the RPG. The Old Generator House lies in this area between the designed landscape and the village, near the model farm. It is clearly delineated as part of the functional aspect of the wider estate. As a former 'service' building, it sat in a distinct hierarchy within the landscape.

We are concerned that the proposed development does not reflect the site's location as part of the functional aspects of the estate. Whilst the current building is taller than the model farm, its footprint is smaller without extensions, and is partially screened, thereby adopting a subservient position in the landscape. The proposed development's two storeys and side extension gives a much more prominent elevation and footprint, making the Old Generator Building much more prominent than the surrounding model farm and the listed water pump on the road. This loses the significance of both the pump and model farm as part of the estate village's make-up, and thus adversely impacts the significance of the landscape by eroding its connection to the estate village. Equally, increasing the built form and associated parking reduces the open green space within the plot, a characteristic that particularly determines the estate village and thus the setting of the historic designed landscape.

The modern design of the proposed building does not complement the half-timbered Victorian cottages, many of which were the original estate cottages surrounding the model farm. This modern design increases the presence of the Old Generator House, thereby losing its subservient image as a 'service' building for the estate. We would urge your officers to request a more sympathetic design that reflects the building's historic role within the landscape. We are also concerned about references made to the Manor House in the Westmoreland roof slates. As a utilitarian 'service' building, design codes would not have been taken from the principal building in the landscape, but instead references should be made to surrounding buildings of a more similar status, such as the model farm.

Overall, the proposed development represents a moderate level of less than substantial harm, as it removes the Old Generator House's place as a 'service' building, thereby eroding the estate village setting of the RPG. The transition between designed landscape parkland and the village is one of the key characteristics that gives Hexton Manor its historical significance. Whilst we acknowledge that there is some public benefit derived from conversion to a dwelling, the proposed design does not respect the place of the Old Generator House in the wider estate landscape. We urge that more modest proposals are put forward.

Should more information become available, please inform us.

Yours faithfully,
Daniel Bowles

Assistant Conservation Casework Manager and Acting Conservation Officer