



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 September 2025

by **L Fern BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X3540/W/25/3366924

Holly Tree Farmhouse, Bell Green, Cratfield, Suffolk IP19 0DN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Richard Boddy against the decision of East Suffolk Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/24/3806/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of agricultural storage building and all associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Concern has been raised that the appellant has sought alterations to the proposed development during the appeal process by way of introducing a business plan that implies the proposed building could be used for practices outside of agricultural storage. Such uses include a farm shop, for cheese production and for the storage of products unrelated to agricultural practices undertaken on the subject land. I have considered the merits of this appeal based on the building proposed to be used for agricultural storage purposes, as originally submitted. The appeal process should not be used to evolve a scheme, and any changes of use outside of agricultural storage would need to be considered under an alternative planning proposal.
3. The Council refers to Policy SCLP11.2 of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (2020) (the LP) in their reason for refusal, which relates to residential amenity. The Council has confirmed that the policy was included in error, and I have therefore not taken it into account in my appeal deliberations.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - Whether or not there is a need for the proposed agricultural storage building; and
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, having regard to the setting of the grade II listed Holly Tree Farmhouse (the farmhouse).

Reasons

Need for agricultural storage building

5. The appellant has confirmed that the fields within the appeal site are cut for hay, which is an agricultural process even if undertaken by an external contractor. Both the Council and interested parties acknowledge that hay cutting is undertaken at the appeal site.
6. Whilst machinery may not need to be stored on site, given that hay cutting occurs, it would be reasonable to assume that there is a need for hay bale storage, which can be achieved either internally or externally depending on the length of time of storage. I observed that the existing modern agricultural storage building on site is relatively small and is unlikely to be substantial enough to store the number of bales produced from the land. Similarly, the storage containers are extremely unlikely to be suitable or large enough to store any baled hay.
7. For the above reasons, I conclude that there is a need for the proposed agricultural storage building. Thus, the proposal complies with Policy SCLP4.5 of the LP, which, amongst other things, supports the delivery of new buildings that the agricultural industry requires to function efficiently.

Character and appearance, and heritage

8. The farmhouse was developed in two phases, the first between the 16th and 17th centuries, with a later 1970s addition to form a T-shaped plan. The property is timber-framed, with colour-washed plaster walls and benefits from an attractive thatched roof. The large and imposing chimney stack mainly comprises unfired brick, which is an unusual survival piece.
9. The property is contained within a small group of buildings, including converted historic barns and more modern storage structures, accessed from Bell Green via a long tree-lined driveway with fields either side. The overall site reads as a historic farmstead. The farmhouse is largely screened from public view from Bell Green by intervening vegetation. However, the adjacent largely undeveloped fields, despite not forming part of the listing description, play an important role in setting the scene and historic context of the property. They are therefore central to the significance of the listed building.
10. The proposed large agricultural storage building would be positioned along the hedge line within the field adjacent to the driveway.
11. Despite being coloured to blend into its surroundings and set against a large hedgerow backdrop at a lower ground level than the farmhouse, the barn would appear as a large, utilitarian and overly prominent addition to the landscape when viewed from the driveway in what is currently an undeveloped field.
12. Furthermore, the isolated and divorced position of the storage building would be contrary to the historic condensed built form of the farmstead buildings, which are concentrated around the farmhouse as the focus.
13. Similar agricultural buildings are present in the surrounding area, such as on The Street, Spong Lane and Swan Green Lane, which were observed during my site visit. However, there is no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate that they

are located within the setting of a listed building, and I am therefore not convinced that these examples are wholly comparable to the appeal proposal before me.

14. For the reasons given above and within the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the farmhouse as a designated heritage asset. The level of harm would be within the lower part of this category.
15. Paragraph 215 of the Framework states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset (in this case the farmhouse), this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
16. The proposed agricultural storage building would mainly benefit the private interests of the farming operation in providing additional storage for hay bales. However, I do acknowledge that some public benefits would exist such as employment during the construction phase and the potential of the building to assist in future business diversification that may also introduce additional employment opportunities.
17. Overall, these benefits are relatively modest and do not outweigh the less than substantial harm the proposal would have on the significance of the farmhouse as a designated heritage asset to which I am required to give great weight. The proposal would therefore conflict with the Framework.
18. Thus, the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and to the setting and significance of the farmhouse in conflict with Policies SCLP10.4, SCLP11.1 and SCLP12.34 of the LP. These policies, amongst other things, support proposals that demonstrate a clear understanding of the character of the built and historic environment and use this understanding to complement local character and distinctiveness, and seek to implement a strategy for rural areas that includes the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets.

Other Matters

19. Concerns have been raised regarding the inaccuracy of the baseline habitat plan as part of the appellant's Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculations. If I was minded to allow the appeal in all other respects, I would need to be certain that all inaccuracies had been remedied prior to determination to ensure the standard BNG condition could be discharged accordingly. However, this is not the case in this instance. I have found harm in relation to character and appearance, and heritage matters that are not outweighed by the public benefits and are therefore determinative. Accordingly, I do not need to consider matters of BNG compliance in detail in this instance.

Conclusion

20. The proposal conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole, and material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

L Fern

INSPECTOR