
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 23 July 2025

by Dr Rachael A Bust BSc (Hons) MA MSc LLM PhD MIOl MCMI FGS MEnvSci MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 November 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/W3520/W/24/3355394

Gresham's Barn, Stowmarket Road, Ringshall, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 2HZ

- 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 Guy Hitchcock against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/24/01146.
 - The development proposed is conversion of former coach house to a single dwelling.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/W3520/Y/24/3355397

Gresham's Barn, Stowmarket Road, Ringshall, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 2HZ

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Guy Hitchcock against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/24/01147.
 - The works proposed are the same as Appeal A.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. The two appeals concern the same scheme under different, complementary legislation. I have had special regard to sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act). I have dealt with both appeals together in my reasoning to avoid duplication.

Main Issues

4. The main issue in both appeals is whether the proposal would preserve the special interest of the Grade II* listed building, Gresham's Barn and the Grade II listed building, Ringshall Hall.
5. For Appeal A, there is a further main issue of whether the proposal is in a suitable location for new residential development.

Reasons

Heritage (Appeals A and B)

6. Gresham's Barn as it is presently known is a Grade II* listed building¹ located some 80 metres from Ringshall Hall. Gresham's Barn dates back to the late 16th century when it was potentially a manorial court hall and built by Sir Thomas Gresham. It was converted into a barn in the 18th century and most recently converted into residential use in 1993. The building is weatherboarded with a plastered timber frame, brick plinth and Roman pan tiled roof with gable ends. Gresham's Barn has a few other external structures but there is limited visibility of these.
7. The significance of Gresham's Barn is in part due to its architectural and historic value. Its design and siting convey a sense of authority and grandeur, and as such reflective of its suggested origins as a manorial court hall. Gresham's Barn was historically within the ownership of Ringshall Hall. Minimal domestic paraphernalia associated with the current residential use was visible during my visit, therefore preserving its historic character. I have not been presented with any cogent evidence of other separate or independent uses being located close to Gresham's Barn and as such this gives a primacy and importance to the significance of this listed building.
8. Ringshall Hall² is a Grade II listed building dating back to the mid-16th century and a former manor house which became a farmhouse. The building is timber framed and plastered on footings of red brick with a hipped plain tiled roof. The listing description indicates there has been remodelling and alterations, including to the frame of the building, and some demolition during its lifetime. From the listing description it is suggested it was built by the Gresham family. As such, the significance of Ringshall Hall is in part due to its historical and functional association with the Gresham family together with architectural interest.
9. The appeal building is known as the coach house and is a one-and-a-half-storey detached building of brick construction, externally painted, with a pantile roof. It comprises two stables, a tack room, and a feed store, with a hayloft which occupies approximately half the roof space above the coach garage. Internally the traditional features such as solid wood and metal stall partitions, metal hay holders, and saddle racks in the wood-panelled tack room remain visible, clearly indicating its intended function. The current design and all the features provide historic legibility, integrity and rural charm.
10. It was built in the 1920s and is sited in between Gresham's Barn and Ringshall Hall. In accordance with section 1(5) of the Act, any object or structure within the curtilage of the listed building which, although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1 July 1948 shall be treated as part of the listed building. I note there is no dispute between the main parties that the appeal building is curtilage listed for the purposes of this decision.
11. The appeal building contributes to the significance of Gresham's Barn through its functional role as an ancillary structure within the setting of Gresham's Barn. A visual relationship can be observed from the siting, design and materials. A gentle downward slope from Gresham's Barn to the appeal site gives the appeal building

¹ List Entry Number: 1352190

² List Entry Number: 1032953

a visually subservient physical appearance. Its simple design and materials visually link it to Gresham's Barn externally and gives a clear indication as to its purpose as an ancillary outbuilding of a coach house/stables. Accordingly, the appeal building does not accommodate a separate or independent use but rather serves a function that is incidental to the enjoyment of Gresham's Barn as a dwellinghouse.

12. Aside from some limited domestic-scale vegetation, the appeal site and Gresham's Barn appear predominantly open from their shared access. The paddock area is enclosed by some modern low level timber fencing; however, this does not diminish the sense of openness and tranquillity of the setting that provides the ability to appreciate the significance of Gresham's Barn. Consequently, I find that the appeal building has rural charm and makes a positive contribution to the setting and therefore the significance of Gresham's Barn.
13. The contribution of the appeal building to the significance of Ringshall Hall is drawn from the historical connection with the Gresham family. There is a physical relationship as a consequence of the siting of the appeal building. However, the intervening vegetation limits the visual relationship, and the ability to see the appeal building, Ringshall Hall and Gresham's Barn within the same views. It is noted that there is now no apparent functional relationship with Ringshall Hall which is within separate ownership. The functional relationship is therefore only apparent from documentary evidence. Consequently, I find that the contribution the appeal building makes to the setting and therefore the significance of Ringshall Hall is limited.

The effect of the proposal

14. The proposal would result in a permanent change of use for the appeal building. Whilst the appellant considers that the proposed residential use does not necessarily benefit the setting of the designated heritage assets, I do not share their view it that would be neutral in both cases. The introduction of a new permanent and independent residential use would sub-divide the existing curtilage and would increase the level of activity with comings and goings. There would also be the inevitable introduction of paraphernalia which is associated with residential uses. This would be a material change in character for the appeal building. It would cease to have the role of a subservient and ancillary building to Gresham's Barn.
15. The subdivision of the curtilage would change the setting and therefore harm the significance of Gresham's Barn. The harm would be less than substantial but given the Grade II* listing status, it would be in the order of moderate.
16. The proposal would introduce a change within the setting of Ringshall Hall. However, given my view on the limited contribution of the appeal building to the significance of this particular Grade II listed building, the change would not introduce any harm to how Ringshall Hall can be experienced. As such the effect of the proposal would preserve the significance of Ringshall Hall.
17. Drawing together my assessment of the effect of the proposal on the designated heritage assets, there would be harm to the significance of Gresham's Barn and, as such, it would not preserve the special interest of this Grade II* listed building. Although there would be a neutral effect on the significance of Ringshall Hall, this cannot outweigh the harm in relation to Gresham's Barn. Accordingly, there is conflict with Policies LP19 and SP09 of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local

Plan-Part 1, adopted November 2023 (JLP) that seek to preserve, enhance or conserve the significance of heritage assets, including the consideration of any contribution made to that significance by their setting in accordance with the statutory tests.

Location (Appeal A only)

18. Policy SP03 of the JLP seeks to focus new residential development within settlement boundaries, to enable good access to facilities and services, and reduce the need to travel. This is consistent with paragraph 83 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The Council indicate that the appeal site is outside of the settlement boundary of Ringshall. Criterion 2 indicates that development will normally only be permitted outside of settlement boundaries where it satisfies one of four sub-criteria; one of which refers to a list of other JLP policies in table 5. As the proposal involves a conversion, Policy LP04 on replacement dwellings and conversions as listed in table 5 is relevant.
19. Policy LP04 requires proposals for conversions to demonstrate, amongst other things, that the building structure is capable of accommodating the use. The proposal is not accompanied by any form of technical report which assesses the structural condition of the building. From my site visit I found the appeal building to visually appear to be in a reasonable condition for its approximate age. Some maintenance has been undertaken, such as the installation of a concrete floor in the coach house garage. There is no dispute between the main parties that the appeal building is structurally capable of being converted and I see no reason to disagree.
20. The final two strands of criterion 2 in LP04 directly quote the Framework's wording on isolated homes in the countryside, specifically, the reuse of redundant or disused buildings and enhancement of their immediate setting. The Council does not appear to consider the appeal building to be isolated, given its location within the residential curtilage of Gresham's Barn and proximity to other dwellings in the general area, including Ringshall Hall.
21. At the time of my visit the appeal building and its associated paddock were not in use for stabling horses. There was no evidence on site of any active use, as such it would be reasonable to assume that it is presently disused. Whether something is redundant is more subjective, but in this case, the appeal building can satisfy this element of the policy by being disused.
22. The final strand of criterion 2 relates to whether the proposal would enhance its immediate setting. The use of the word 'setting' appears to be used in a general sense and therefore the building's own setting. In my view it should not be confused or conflated with the use of setting in a heritage context which has a much more specific use and is, in part, as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Suitable planning conditions could be used to manage the surroundings and the setting of the appeal building if the appeal was to be allowed. I note that the Council has raised no concerns regarding the additional requirements set out in criterion 3. Having regard to the appeal scheme details, I also have no concerns in this respect.
23. In conclusion to the main issue of location, I find the appeal proposal would satisfy Policies LP04 and SP03 of the JLP, which seeks to ensure, amongst other things,

that conversions enhance their immediate setting and would be in a suitable location for development.

Other Matters

24. The Council's second reason for refusal related to insufficient information regarding flood risk. The Council's updated Statement of Case includes the latest consultation response from the Environment Agency regarding flood risk. Consequently, the Council is now not maintaining its position with an objection to the proposal on the grounds of flood risk. Having regard to the submitted evidence within the site-specific Level 3 Flood Risk Assessment, including the latest information, I do not find that there remains any in principle reason for refusal on flood risk grounds. Any flood risk related matters could be secured using appropriate conditions, were the appeal to be acceptable in all other respects. As such the proposal satisfies the requirements of Policies SP10 and LP27 of the JLP regarding flood risk and vulnerability, and adaptation to climate change.
25. The appellant contends that other policies are relevant to the determination of this appeal, such as Policy LP02 on residential annexes and Policy LP03 for residential extensions and conversions. However, these policies are not relevant to the scheme which has been applied for. Furthermore, it is not the role of the appeal to consider alternative schemes, but to determine the scheme on the basis of the terms which has been applied for and that is what I have done in this case.

The Heritage Balance and Conclusions

26. The Framework requires great weight to be given to the heritage asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.
27. In this case, the sub-division of the existing curtilage would introduce an unacceptable change to the setting of Gresham's Barn and how it is experienced. Given the Grade II* listing status it is an asset of the highest significance. The harm would be less than substantial in terms of the Framework, and in my view in the order of moderate. This carries considerable weight and importance in the overall balance.
28. As I consider that the appeal building makes a limited contribution to the significance of Ringshall Hall, the appeal proposal would have a neutral effect on Ringshall Hall. Accordingly, this would preserve the special interest or setting of this particular listed building as required by the Act.
29. Policy LP19 of the JLP refers to the Framework in order to engage the policy tests and weigh the moderate, less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
30. The public benefits of the proposal would include the provision of a single, one-bedroom dwelling which would make a very small contribution to local and national housing targets. Accordingly, this attracts a limited level of weight, particularly in the context that the Council has a five-year housing land supply. Some employment

in the construction process would be generated by this proposal, albeit for a temporary period, this would attract limited weight. Future occupiers of the dwelling, and temporary construction workers, could support local services and facilities in the wider area. This would be of limited weight.

31. The appellant suggests the proposal would bring the building back into use, revive its charm and character with a significant visual enhancement, before it falls into disrepair and is lost over time. It is accepted that the appeal building is disused. However, there is no cogent evidence that there is a genuine risk to the appeal building itself or the long-term conservation of the listed buildings and their significance. As such I do not find a substantive argument has been made out for the appeal proposal to be considered as a form of enabling development. The appellant also asserts that the appeal building is not in the optimal viable use which is disputed by the Council. No substantive supporting evidence has been presented to support this point, therefore I can only view this as a neutral consideration.
32. I have found the public benefits to be of limited weight. As such they do not individually, or cumulatively, outweigh the identified harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset. Consequently, there is no clear and convincing justification for the appeal proposal.
33. Accordingly, I conclude that, on balance, the appeal proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the Grade II* listed Gresham's Barn. It would conflict with Policies LP19 and SP09 of the JLP that seek to preserve, enhance or conserve the significance of heritage assets, including the consideration of any contribution made to that significance by their setting in accordance with the statutory tests.
34. Bringing everything together, whilst I am satisfied that the appeal proposal would be in a suitable location for new residential development and that the original concerns regarding flood risk have subsequently fallen away; these matters cannot overcome the heritage harm as this carries considerable weight and importance in the overall balance. Consequently, I conclude that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, that would outweigh that conflict. Therefore, both appeals should be dismissed.

Dr Rachael A Bust

INSPECTOR