
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 January 2026

by **G Sylvester BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 February 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/W3520/W/25/3374087

Land rear of The Outfield, Green Road, Woolpit IP30 9RG

- 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 Mrs Kathryn Parker against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/25/02867.
 - The development proposed is the erection of tractor shed.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. In determining this appeal, I have had regard to my duty under Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention, and have regard to, the desirability of preserving the settings of listed buildings.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this appeal are the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, and whether it would preserve the settings of the Grade II listed buildings known as Abbey Cottage and Abbey Farmhouse.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site is a small area of a much larger parcel of generally flat and spacious land that is predominantly covered with closely mown grass that is bordered on three sides by hedgerows. To the north and east are a mixture of relatively closely spaced rows of residential dwellings clearly identifiable as comprising part of the built core of the settlement. By contrast the buildings to the south and west, which appear to include residential and non-residential buildings, are generally set in a scattered pattern, often within densely planted grounds, and interspersed amongst sizeable parcels of open, undeveloped grass covered land bordered by hedgerows.
5. Being contiguous with the open land immediately around it and towards the west, the condition of the appeal site makes it a small but important part of the swathe of verdant and largely open land beyond the edge of the settlement and clearly distinguishable from its built-up core. Consequently, the appeal site contributes positively to the rural landscape character and appearance of the countryside and to the landscaped setting of the settlement.

6. There would be limited visibility of the proposed building from the nearby roads due to the combination of its low height, the distances of views and the screening effects of intervening buildings and planting. In the few views of the building that could be obtained, it would be seen against the dark backdrop of trees where it would not be prominent or strident in the landscape. However, the proposed building would be clearly appreciable in views from several nearby properties and the relevant planning policies are not applicable solely to development visible from public vantage points.
7. Even though the proposed building would be a relatively modestly sized structure covering a small area of land, its built form would harmfully erode the spaciousness of the appeal site by occupying land where no building currently exists, and in a position somewhat isolated from any existing structure. The domestic appearance of its timber framed cart-lodge design would also appear discordant as it would be set amongst a spacious parcel of land where it would have no clear functional association with any existing residential dwelling. Consequently, the proposed building would detract from the positive contribution the appeal site makes to the character and appearance of the countryside landscape and to the setting of the village.
8. For the reasons given above I conclude on this main issue that the appeal proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policies SP09, LP17 and LP24 of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan – Part 1 November 2023 (“the JLPP1”) insofar as they seek to ensure that development conserves, enhances and integrates with the existing landscape character, reinforces local distinctiveness, and is harmonious with its location, and Policy WT14 of the Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan 2016 – 2036 Referendum Version October 2022 (“the WNP”) insofar as it seeks for visual impacts on rural setting of the village to be mitigated.

Listed buildings

9. The significance and special interest of Abbey Cottage and Abbey Farmhouse are derived partly from their age, materials and traditional vernacular architecture, and partly from their spaciouly rural settings. On the evidence before me the appeal site and the larger parcel of generally flat and spacious land around it are amongst the best-preserved parts of the former medieval Woolpit Green. Woolpit Green was likely used as pastoral common land for grazing by the occupiers of the dwellings which surrounded it, including Abbey Cottage and Abbey Farmhouse, resulting in a strong historical and functional relationship between them. As the appeal site is part of Woolpit Green it forms part of the settings of those listed buildings.
10. From the appeal site it was also just about possible to obtain glimpses of the listed buildings through gaps in the planting and between the trunks of those sizeable trees. Whilst those views would likely be fully obscured when the planting is in leaf it does not alter my conclusion that the appeal site makes an important contribution to the settings of those listed buildings and their significance and special interest as designated heritage assets. Although the proposed building would be of a modest size and would occupy a small parcel of land, its built form would inevitably encroach into the settings of those listed buildings given its proximity to them. Even if there was no intervisibility between them, I consider that the built form of the proposed building would result in a modest erosion of the

appeal site's spaciousness. This would result in a small but irreversible adverse effect on how the historic functional relationship between the listed buildings and the former Woolpit Green is experienced and appreciated.

11. Consequently, the proposed development would harm the settings and special interest of those buildings and their significance as designated heritage assets contrary to JLPP1 Policies SP09 and LP24, and WNP Policy WT15 insofar as they seek to ensure that development conserves and enhances the historic environment. JLPP1 Policy LP19 requires clear and convincing justification for any harm to heritage assets in line with the National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework").
12. In this instance and in the Framework's language the harm to the significance of those listed buildings would be 'less than substantial' and at the lowest end of that spectrum. Nonetheless, Paragraph 212 of the Framework requires great weight be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets which are irreplaceable. The harm to the significance of those listed buildings is therefore a matter of considerable importance and weight in my decision and requires clear and convincing justification. Less than substantial harm does not amount to a less than substantial objection to the proposal. Framework Paragraph 215 requires the harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which I shall return to in my planning balance.

Other Matters

13. The proposal would deliver a small public benefit by enhancing biodiversity through the mandatory national condition and the requirements of JLPP1 Policies SP09 and LP16. Economic benefits would accrue through its construction, including purchasing materials and labour. The proposed building would likely facilitate beneficial maintenance of the former Woolpit Green through grass cutting. However, that would be a small benefit given that the land appears to be well maintained at present and there is no indication that an overgrown state would necessarily amount to harm. There is little to suggest that alternative options for siting a building where it might avoid or lessen the harm to the listed buildings has been explored.
14. There is no dispute that the appeal site lies outside of any defined settlement boundary where the JLPP1 seeks to restrict most forms of development in order to, amongst others, give effect to the Framework's requirement for policies and decisions to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. I do not consider it necessary for me to resolve the dispute as to whether the use of the appeal site is agricultural or paddock land, or none of them. Either way, the effects of the proposed building on the character and appearance of the area, and the settings of the listed buildings would be the same.
15. I am not convinced on the evidence before me that 'paddock' is a land use. Nonetheless, for the purposes of adopting a benchmark for the determination of this appeal, I have treated the use of the appeal site as not being agriculture, but this should not be taken as a formal determination that it is either of the disputed uses, or none of them. In that scenario JLPP1 Policy LP22 would not be a relevant policy for the determination of the appeal.
16. Although the development plan does not contain a specific policy for tractor sheds or maintenance buildings on paddock land, there are several policies in the

Council's development plan that are relevant to the appeal proposal and its effects in respect of the main issues above. Accordingly, this is not a case where Framework paragraph 11.d is relevant and, in any case, the policies within it that protect assets of particular importance would provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed.

17. It is not within my remit under Section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ("the Act") to formally determine whether shipping containers to store machinery to maintain the land would be development requiring planning permission. If the appellant wishes to ascertain a formal determination, they may make an application under Section 192 of the Act, and the onus would be on them to make their case. The Council considers that a change of use of land would be necessary for shipping containers.
18. No details of the shipping containers are before me. Insofar as relevant to this appeal, the appellant has not advanced convincing evidence showing that the proposed shipping containers would not be development requiring planning permission, or that they would be permitted development. The appellant has not made any specific reference to the provisions in the Act, or to the meaning of the development, nor to any provisions under the General Permitted Development Order. Consequently, on the evidence before me it has not been shown that shipping containers amount to a fallback position from which to assess the effects of the appeal scheme. I therefore attach limited weight to the appellant's suggestion that they do.
19. As the appeal building would be sited much closer to the listed buildings than those existing dwellings in the area, which are generally set in rows with roadside frontages, it does not follow that a building smaller than them would have acceptable effects. I am not aware of the planning circumstances of those dwellings. As the siting of the proposed building would not be comparable to those existing dwellings, I find that they offer little support for the appeal scheme.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

20. The public benefits of the proposed development carry limited weight in favour of the appeal, and they are insufficient to outweigh the low level of less than substantial harm to the setting and significance of the listed buildings as designated heritage assets. Accordingly, there is no clear and convincing justification for the harm that would be caused to those heritage assets when considered against Framework Paragraph 213 and JLPP1 Policy LP19.
21. The proposal would comply with JLPP1 policies that relate to biodiversity, residential amenity, flood risk and highway safety. However, the conflict with JLPP1 Policies SP09, LP17, LP19 and LP24, and WNP Policies WT14 and WT15 in respect of the main issues above is sufficient to bring the development in conflict with the development plan as a whole. That conflict carries substantial weight against the appeal development. The material considerations, including the benefits of the proposal and the provisions of the Framework, are insufficient to outweigh that finding. Consequently, I conclude that the appeal proposal is unacceptable, and the appeal is dismissed.

G Sylvester

INSPECTOR