
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 March 2026

by **G Bayliss BA (Hons) MA MA MRTPI IHBC**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 March 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/W3520/W/25/3369407

Ivy Lodge Farm, Back Street, Gislingham, Suffolk IP23 8JH

- 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 Mick Seaby against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/25/00898.
 - The development proposed is the conversion and extension of Grade II listed barn with midstrey to form 1 no. dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have based the description of development in the banner heading above on that given in the appellant's application form but for clarity I have added that the barn would be converted to a dwelling.
3. The evidence indicates that the appellant originally applied for both planning permission and listed building consent for the scheme subject to this appeal. However, only the planning appeal is before me, and I have limited my consideration to this matter.
4. I have a statutory duty under section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
5. On site, I saw that some elements of the appeal building did not exactly correspond with the design and layout shown on the existing plans. For the purposes of this appeal, I have mainly based my decision on the submitted plans rather than what I saw on the ground.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the special interest and significance of designated heritage assets.

Reasons

7. The appeal relates to an outbuilding, referred to as Ivy Lodge Barn, which stands alongside Ivy Lodge Farmhouse. This historic farmstead is located along a rural lane. Ivy Lodge Barn is a Grade II listed building (listed as Barn about 25 metres south east of Ivy Lodge Farmhouse Ref.1033125). The list description mentions

that the barn dates from the 17th century and is of timber frame construction, clad in weatherboarding, some rendering and sheet cladding with a steeply pitched roof covered in corrugated asbestos. It mentions that it is of three bays with two bay added midstre. It explains that the central bay is open to the yard, midstre opposite, loft openings to the rear and a lean-to on the left side of the midstre. The description goes on to explain in some detail the internal arrangement of the timbers and other features. The significance of this building, in so much as it relates to the appeal before me, is largely derived from its considerable age and historic fabric, together with its plan form and details which relate to its historic function as a threshing barn. These attributes, along with its distinctive vernacular appearance, mark it as an important survival of an historic farm building.

8. Alongside the barn is Ivy Lodge Farmhouse which is also Grade II listed (Ref.1352109). The list description mentions that the farmhouse dates from the 17th century and is of timber frame construction, plastered, with a steeply pitched pantile roof. It describes its L-shaped plan and its two storeys with attics. It goes on to explain the form of the building, its detailing and historic features. In relation to this appeal, the building's significance derives from its historic form and function and its association with the historic farmstead. Both the farmhouse and appeal building are described as having group value and this elevates their degree of significance.
9. Whilst the farmhouse is clearly seen from the road, the appeal building is set back within the former historic farm yard where its relationship with the farmhouse and wider farmstead can be clearly seen. The building group is surrounded by a mainly agricultural landscape, and this context reinforces the function and origins of the farmstead and contributes positively to the environment in which it is appreciated and experienced.
10. The appeal proposal seeks to convert the barn into a four bedroom dwelling and would include an extension, part of which is described as an historically relevant converted horse engine house. The appellant advises that in Suffolk, horse engine houses were historically commonly associated with a threshing barn providing power for the machinery.
11. The proposed extension may be on a similar footprint of earlier lean-to structures, but these are no longer standing. Also, there is little to suggest that these former additions, which may have appeared on historic maps, made any important contribution to the architectural or historic interest of the building such that they may justify a form of reinstatement.
12. It is suggested that the proposed addition would enable a lighter touch on the existing building, allow more of the historic features and open character to be retained and would concentrate the main, modern services within the proposed extension. However, the extension would be substantial in footprint, scale and form. I recognise that the appellant has sought to reduce the size of the extension from previous schemes, but the proposal, even with appropriate materials, remains vastly over-sized. Its effect would be to significantly disrupt the simple plan form of the historic building and its legibility and, whilst it would be lower in height, it would represent a visibly complex and rambling addition. The proposed bedroom sizes may be comparable to those of neighbouring development but that would not justify similar sizes within this listed building. Furthermore, the appearance of the extension with its octagon shape and angled roof would represent an unusual and

unexpected addition which would compete with the historic form and appearance of the barn and draw the eye. It may be that some threshing barns are associated with horse engine houses, but few details have been provided or indeed to illustrate what they looked like. There may be a local example, but it is not clearly explained how the proposal reflects or draws inspiration from this.

13. Even if there are relevant examples, it does not appear that such a structure existed on this farm or in this location. Therefore, to construct such a building would be speculation and would serve to confuse the historical understanding of this site and its integrity. Furthermore, the intention to construct a domestic interpretation of such a structure takes the design further away from any historic precedent such that it looks contrived and poorly conceived. If a case could be made for additional accommodation to support this conversion and to respect the building's significance, reference should be taken from the existing structure and its simple form and modest size.
14. In relation to other proposed alterations to the exterior, it is difficult to understand the nature of the changes as the existing drawings do not appear to accurately identify the location or appearance of all existing/historic openings. Furthermore, there is little commentary to explain these changes. Based on the information before me, it would appear that a number of new or enlarged openings would be introduced. Therefore, even though it is suggested that windows and doors would be fitted between the existing studs and some appear to have an agricultural character, it is not possible to fully gauge the impact of the proposed changes on the significance of the building. A much more detailed analysis of the historic building fabric and the nature of the proposed changes is required.
15. The proposed development may not be particularly visible from public viewpoints, but it would be clearly visible within its agricultural context, including alongside the farmhouse, and the harm would be readily seen. In this regard, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of public views and the assessment is not just focussed on frontages.
16. Due to the size and appearance of the extension and the lack of detail to analyse the existing building fabric and to fully justify the changes, the proposal would irreversibly harm the building's special interest and significance. The proposal would also erode the agricultural setting of Ivy Lodge Farmhouse, and the significance of both designated heritage assets would be permanently diminished. Therefore, the expectations of the Act would not be met.
17. Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. It goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the asset, or from development within its setting, and any such harm should have a clear and convincing justification. I find the harm in the context of the significance of the heritage assets, in the language of the Framework, to be a moderate level of less than substantial harm in this instance. This commands considerable importance and weight and is not to be treated as a less than substantial objection to the proposal. The Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing the asset's optimal viable use.

18. The proposal would secure a long-term use for the barn, and it may be that conversion to a dwelling is the building's optimal viable use. It could also secure appropriate repairs to the building fabric and the retention of important historic features. The dwelling would contribute towards housing land supply, an important Framework consideration in favour of the development. There would also be some social and economic benefits during construction and occupation. However, it has not been demonstrated that these public benefits could not be achieved through an alternative scheme, thereby avoiding the harm identified to the heritage assets. It may be that the development would be costly in comparison to works to a similarly sized modern house but there is little before me to understand how this is relevant. Overall, these benefits carry limited weight.
19. Given the above, I conclude that the public benefits of limited weight would be insufficient to outweigh the great weight to be given to the harm to the designated heritage assets. In addition, there is no clear and convincing justification for the harm to the significance of the heritage assets. As such, the proposal would not comply with the Framework and conflict with Policy LP19 and LP24 of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan-Part 1 (2023) which seek to safeguard and enhance the historic environment.

Conclusion

20. For the above reasons and having regard to the development plan as a whole and all other material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Bayliss

INSPECTOR