
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 February 2026

by **T C King BA(Hons), MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 June 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/W3520/Y/25/3373299

Mendham Priory, Mendham, Harleston IP20 0JH

- 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 Mrs Kate Fanning against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/25/00473.
 - The works proposed are Application for Listed Building Consent - Internal alterations to the ground floor layout, removal of later added rear boiler room, removal of cement render and re-render with lime render.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for '*Internal alterations to the ground floor layout, removal of later added rear boiler room, removal of cement render and re-render with lime render*' at Mendham Priory, Harleston IP20 0JH in accordance with the terms of the application Ref DC/25/00473 and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions set out in the attached Schedule.

The Proposal's elements

2. The main element in this case would be the removal of the wall divide between the existing kitchen/breakfast room and the larder and utility/boot-room situated to its rear. A larger, open kitchen would be created and the utility/boot-room would be reduced in size area. It is proposed to introduce a steel over the new opening which will support the structure above.
3. The new divide would be in the form of a timber stud wall would be erected, separating the kitchen/breakfast room and the utility/boot-room. The studwork would be sheathed on both sides with wood wool boards with lime plaster over and decorated with breathable paint.
4. There is a current variation in floor levels, and it is intended that the floors be levelled throughout the above rooms. Existing pavement tiles in the utility/boot-room would be relaid and the kitchen floor would also be relaid in stone.
5. It is proposed to reconfigure the existing cupboard which is adjacent to the kitchen and currently accessed from the hallway. Cupboard doors either side of the kitchen fireplace would also be replaced.
6. The currently exposed pipework (in the kitchen and larder areas) would be concealed beyond a false lowered ceiling.
7. No other internal rooms within the building would be affected by the proposed works.

8. A relatively modern, concrete, outside boiler house that abuts the rear wall of the utility/boot-room, and which clearly appears as an anomalous feature, would also be removed. The affected part of the rear elevation would be re-rendered with lime render. The Council has raised no objections to this element of the proposal.

Main Issue,

9. The main issue is whether the proposed works would preserve the special architectural and historic interest of this Grade II listed building, Mendham Priory, Mendham, Harleston IP20 0JH.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

10. The significance of the listed building relates primarily to its external architectural and historical features. As regards to the internal layout the listing entry mentions only the two main ground floor rooms, the drawing room and study, and also the entrance hall, all of which have noteworthy cornice features. One of the rooms also has a central rosette. None of the other rooms in the house are mentioned.
11. Where only internal works are involved, as is the case here (save for the removal of the outside boiler room) any proposals will be judged having regard to the original plan form, historic fabric, and architectural details. Along with the level of significance the nature of the works and their extent should also be considered.

Effects

12. Sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act require special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Additionally, when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 212 of the Framework requires that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). Paragraph 213 goes on to say that the significance of the listing can be harmed or lost through the asset's alteration or destruction, amongst other things, and that this should have clear and convincing justification.
13. With historic dwellings it is obviously preferable to keep the historic grain of the building which means keeping the main rooms in their existing positions. However, in this particular case, there is some disagreement between the parties as to what exactly the original layout was in terms of the kitchen and the rooms to its rear along with the other small ground floor rooms to the building's rear.
14. It is generally possible with listed buildings to remove internal walls to make larger rooms, or to divide a large room into smaller spaces, without affecting the significance of the listing but this will depend on the importance of the rooms and the walls themselves. Here, it would appear that there have been some physical alterations previously carried out which would explain the internal window between the larder and the utility/boot-room, which lines up with the larder's side window on its opposite flank wall. From my site visit I felt that the current layout makes for a somewhat awkward arrangement. Moreover, I also noted that the existing kitchen/breakfast room has only very limited light entry and ventilation. Enlarging the room would clearly be beneficial in this respect.

15. The ceilings to the kitchen/breakfast room, larder and utility/boot-room, which have little distinct character, would be lowered slightly to conceal a multitude of obtrusive high-level modern pipework. At my site visit I noted that these are particularly unsightly. Old fittings and shelving erected within the larder also appear at odds with the historical fabric of the building's interior.
16. The Council objects primarily to the removal of existing walls and partitions which would be necessary to create a larger kitchen/breakfast room. This would mean that the currently separate kitchen and rear larder would be amalgamated. A down-stand beam would be inserted along the line of the existing wall divide, along with the doorway to the utility/boot room. The appellant says that removal would still allow for the former layout to be discerned, and the intended works could be reversed, although I would consider the latter unlikely given my findings.
17. The Council acknowledges that the design of the cupboard doors, either side of the fireplace do not match and I noted that they are different in terms of height and panelling. The cupboards would be retained, but with the single leaf, panelled doors replaced. The Council says that both doors would appear to be of some age and historic interest, so harm would likely arise from the loss of either. I am not convinced that this would necessarily be the case, though, and a condition could be imposed requiring details of the new doors' design and materials, which would show measured elevations and large scale section drawings.
18. The appellant's specialist heritage consultant says that the dwelling's domestic facilities have not been altered in some seventy years and the current arrangements do not reflect modern requirements. This is not, of course, a reason in itself for granted listed building consent for the proposed alterations in their entirety, but I note that the Council's reason for refusal states *'the removal and alteration of certain internal walls and doors would erode the likely historic, fabric and features'*. This suggests that certain assumptions have been drawn, especially when the exact plan form history of this part of the building is not entirely clear from the evidence.
19. I recognise the desire of the appellant and her family to adapt the building to suit their needs, particularly in terms of its existing layout, facilities and services. However, heritage assets are required to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. When assessing the impact of the intended works, I observed that the three rooms affected are showing elements of disrepair, and are in need of some considerable attention.
20. The Council is of the view that the proposed works would result in a low to medium level of less than substantial harm. If finding harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the Framework and Planning Practice Guidance require the category of harm to be 'explicitly identified', and the extent of the harm within that category to be 'clearly articulated'. Having had regard to the very localised nature of the alterations and, in relating this to the building's identified significance, I find that the scheme would not result in any residual harm to the appeal property as its elements would have a neutral effect and would preserve the special interest of the asset and not harm its significance.
21. I consider that the proposed alterations have been carefully designed to be sympathetic to the building's historic character. The works will not result in the loss of any primary historic fabric and key original features. Further, I consider that the proposed works would represent the economically viable use that causes the least harm to its architectural or historic significance. Accordingly, it would support the building's long term conservation and thereby sustain the significance of this heritage

asset. With its significance preserved the public benefits balance set out in paragraph 215 of the Framework is not engaged.

22. Taking into account the particular circumstances and having carefully considered all the evidence, I find that the proposed works respect the statutory duty placed upon the heritage asset under section 16(2) of the Act. The scheme would ensure that the special architectural and historic interest of the building would be preserved, and the proposed alterations would respect the historic plan form and fabric of this Grade II listed building.
23. The proposal would also accord with paragraph 202 of the Framework which seeks to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed by this and future generations, and secure the long-term viable use of the building.

Conditions

24. Although I consider that the works would not impact on the building's special interest it is important that they are carried out so as not to harm that interest, and this can be satisfactorily secured by appropriately worded conditions.
25. I have had regard to the conditions put forward by the Council and am of the view that these are all necessary and reasonable in the circumstances. They are framed so as to ensure that the works are carried out to an acceptable standard and would mean that the changes would be to a satisfactory appearance.

Conclusion

26. I therefore conclude that the proposal would satisfy the requirements of sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act and the provisions within the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

T C King

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

1. The works to which this consent relate must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this consent.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawings nos 22748-01_Rev C (Site location plan), 22748-01_Rev C (Block Plan – Existing), 22748-02_Rev C (Floor Plan – Existing), 22748-03_Rev B (Elevations – Existing), 22748-04_Rev C (Floor Plan – Proposed) and 22748-05_Rev B (Elevations – Proposed).
3. Prior to the installation of the new cupboard doors in the Kitchen/Breakfast Room, details of the proposed cupboard door design and materials, to include measured elevation and section drawings, at 1:10 and 1:2 respectively, and/or manufacturer's literature, as appropriate, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All subsequent works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.
4. Following the lifting and removal of the lino floor finish in the Kitchen/Breakfast Room and pampments in the utility/boot room, prior to the commencement of any further excavation, or installation of new floor material, each layer uncovered/proposed for excavation shall be suitably recorded, including with photographs, and the record shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for agreement to both the principle of excavating that layer, as applicable, and the level of recording submitted. All subsequent works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details. Opportunity for the local planning authority to inspect on site following the removal /lifting of each layer, shall be provided as part of this condition. Each layer proposed to be excavated must be removed/lifted sequentially in order to enable each layer to be appropriately assessed, to confirm whether excavation would be appropriate, and recorded.
5. Notwithstanding the submitted information, following approval of the recording of existing floor layers in accordance with the relevant condition, prior to the installation of any new floor build-up, details of proposed materials to be used, including manufacturer's literature and/or photographs of sample of materials, and detailed section drawings through the proposed floor build-up(s), at 1:20 or as appropriate, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All subsequent works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.
6. Following the removal of the existing cement render and prior to the commencement of any works to any underlying fabric, a Schedule of Works of any repairs/alterations proposed to that fabric shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Schedule shall include [1] a written statement detailing materials and methods existing and proposed, and [2a] annotated photographs, including whole elevation photographs and closeups of the fabric, or [2b] measured survey drawings, as appropriate to the works needed, showing where the work is proposed. The Schedule shall include a Programme Timetable which includes reasonable opportunity for the Council to inspect the exposed fabric prior to the commencement of the works and to

finalise whether a measured survey [2b] is required to satisfy this condition. Any works shall thereafter be undertaken in accordance with the agreed Schedule and Programme Timetable.

7. Prior to the installation of any new render, details of proposed render mix, to include ratios and constituent parts and/or manufacturer's literature, and details of the proposed render finish, to include details of finish type and colour, including RAL number/photographs of colour sample), shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All subsequent works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.
8. The new false ceiling in the new kitchen/breakfast room shall only be installed above the highest points of the timber surrounds to the existing sash windows on the northwest elevation.
9. The new false ceiling in the new Kitchen/Breakfast Room shall be finished with a smooth plaster finish only and shall not include any covings, cornices or other architectural details.
10. Following the removal of the internal walls, all adjacent fabric shall be made good using matching materials and methods.
11. No works to the internal walls and cupboards in the current breakfast room shall commence until the cement render and Boiler House have been fully removed/demolished in accordance with the approval plans and documents.