

High-Level Heritage Assessment for ^[11]_{SEP}

PROPOSED TREE HOUSE AT MONKS HALL, SYLEHAM, SUFFOLK IP21 4LN

For Mr. & Mrs. Grimes



Cover photo: Front elevation looking west
National Grid Reference: 620170 – 278480

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Authorship of this High-Level Assessment

This report is Bob Kindred MBE BA IHBC MRTPI - the former Head of Conservation, Urban Design & Planning Policy at Ipswich Borough Council with over 40 years' continuous experience in the public, private and voluntary heritage sectors. He was awarded the MBE for services to heritage in 1999.

He is a member of the Council of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation and Vice-Chair of its Education Training & Standards Committee; a Trustee of the Ancient Monuments Society and the Suffolk Preservation Society; a Casework Panel member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings; the heritage assessor member of the RIBA Suffolk Design Review Panel; an Honorary Member of the Suffolk Association of Architects since 1992; and a member of the St Edmundsbury & Ipswich Diocesan Advisory Committee.

He was the Standing Special Heritage Advisor to the House of Commons Culture Media & Sport Committee [2005 to 2012] advising on five major heritage inquiries; a member of the UK Commission for UNESCO [1999 to 2010]; and on the Main Committee of the Victorian Society [1987 to 1997].

He was part of the Regulatory Working Group of the sector wide Power of Place Inquiry 1997-9 and was seconded to the DCMS to advise on Heritage Protection Reform 2004-7 and the draft Heritage Protection Bill.

He initiated the concept of Heritage Partnership Agreements [HPAs] in 1992 (for the Grade 1 Willis Building in Ipswich) and these protocols were formally incorporated into heritage legislation via the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013.

His definitive publication on Listed Buildings Repairs Notices was the only non-governmental reference source included in PPG15 and he advised ODPM on their Best Practice Guidance on Listed Building Prosecutions having established in 1996 (and continues to maintain) the national on-line database of Listed Building Prosecutions.

He provided external critical input to the 2019 Saunders report for Historic England on the review of the statutory list.

His portfolio of project involvements includes the assessment, evaluation and recording of historic buildings and heritage sites and has prepared numerous heritage impact assessments to accompany applications for planning permission and listed building consent relating to both designated and non-designated heritage assets of all forms and grades.

He was editor of the IHBC's professional journal *Context* from 1989-1999; has been one of the three Consultant Editors of the international *Journal of Architectural Conservation* since 2005; and is the author of a number of heritage publications including contributions to the professional literature on historic windows and the care and management of 20th century historic buildings and is the joint author of the *Dictionary of Architects of Suffolk Buildings 1800-1914*.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Bob Kindred Heritage Consultants Ltd were commissioned by Mr. Simon Payne of Blue Planet on behalf of Mr. & Mrs Grimes to complete a high-level heritage assessment regarding proposals for a tree-house within the grounds at the Grade 2* listed Monks Hall, Syleham, Suffolk IP21 4LN.

1.2 This report forms part of the documentation for the project for the purposes of eliciting a pre-application opinion from the local planning authority regarding the heritage impact (or otherwise) on the setting of the listed building.

1.3 The site is situated on rising ground in woodland to the southwest of Monks Hall. It is an isolated location on the south bank of the River Waveney to the northeast of Hoxne and southwest of Brockdish.

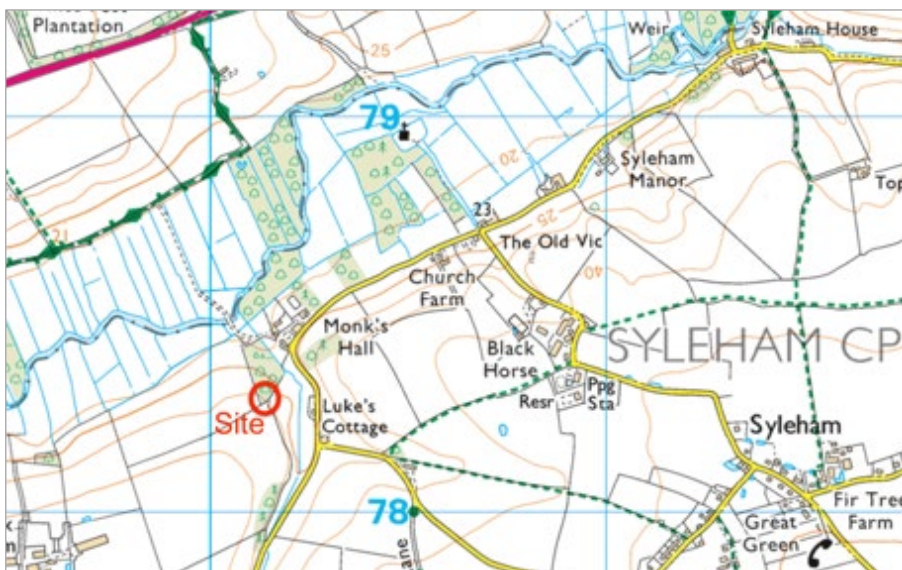


Fig.1 Location Plan

1.4 The proposed site of the tree-house has no direct impact on Monks Hall, is not located within a designated conservation area and it is understood that the local planning authority as not identified any non-designated heritage assets in the vicinity.

1.5 An initial site inspection was made to the site on 10th May 2021 and the photographs in this assessment were taken on that date.

2. HERITAGE DESIGNATION

2.1 The thinly scattered distribution of listed buildings in this part of rural Suffolk is shown in Figure 2.



Fig.2 Distribution of listed buildings in the parish of Syleham and general vicinity is shown as blue triangles – [Source: National Heritage List for England] – the River Waveney is the sinuous grey line crossing the map from bottom left to top right

Monks Hall

2.2 Monks Hall was Listed Grade 2* on 29th July 1955 [List Entry Number: 1032921, Legacy System No: 280065 National Grid Reference: TM 20161 78470]. (Fig.3) The statutory description is approximately 66 years old and has not been amended and is set out in the Annex. Further historical research in the intervening six decades has refined some of the dating. Reference is made for example to the 'original' porch where 'early' might be more accurate.

2.3 In summary, the Hall is now considered to be 15th rather than 16th century and is thought to have always been completely rendered until the first third of the 20th century when the timber-framing to the south elevation of the main range was exposed.

2.4 The Hall was partly re-modelled in the 17th century but a long succession of tenancies and low agricultural rents through to the late 19th century and the isolated location resulted in little external or internal alterations being made. Notable alterations were made to the external appearance by two successive owners in the 1930s and late 1940s, and 16th and 17th century room paneling was introduced from local manor houses or yeoman farmhouses in the early 1950s.

2.5 The Hall was not originally listed Grade 2*. There were three grades 1, 2 and 3 at the inception of the listing process with government ministers dispensing with Grade 3 in 1970 with differentiations made to establish the more noteworthy Grade 2 statutory list entries by appending the asterisk (star) in c.1972.

2.6 Listed buildings thus became in order of importance (as now defined):
Grade 1: Buildings of exceptional interest, of the highest significance;
Grade 2*: Particularly important buildings of more than special interest; and
Grade 2: Buildings of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them.



Fig.3 Monks Hall - Front (south) elevation

3. SETTING

3.1 The law relating to listed buildings is enshrined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This places a duty on local planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and any features of importance, and regarding their settings (Sections 16 and 66).

3.2 As noted in Section 1 there is no direct impact on Monks Hall and the issue for consideration under heritage legislation in this high-level assessment is therefore one of setting.

3.3 Advice regarding the setting of heritage assets is set out in Historic England's '*Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3*' [GPA 3]¹ and the aim of GPA 3 is to assist in implementing historic environment policy in the National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF 02-2019], but paragraph 10 (p.6) of GPA 3 also states that the implications of development affecting the setting of heritage assets i.e., Monks Hall should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3.4 While GPA 3 defines the character of a historic place as the sum of all its attributes: its relationships with people, now and through time; its visual aspects; and the features, materials, and spaces associated with its history, including its original configuration and subsequent losses and changes; in this instance the proposal is for a tree-house situated in woodland at a distance of approximately 176.5M (580ft.)²

3.5 The NPPF makes it clear that the setting of a heritage asset is the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced, its extent is not always fixed and may make a positive or negative contribution to significance or may be neutral in its effect and this may change over time.

3.6 The secluded visual setting of Monks Hall has been defined in part by the large deciduous trees to the road frontage but also by the woodland to the southwest defined as the New Plantation on the First Series Twenty-Five Inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1884 (published 1886). (Fig.4)



Fig.4 First Series Twenty-Five Inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1884 (published 1886).
Not reproduced to scale

¹ Originally published by English Heritage in March 2015 and re-published (Version 2) by Historic England December 2017
² It has been calculated that the distance from the southwest corner of the Hall to the Ordnance Survey defined woodland edge is 24M (79ft.) and therefore over 85% of the distance to the proposed tree-house is within the woodland



Fig.5 Current aerial view showing landscape relationship of the proposed site to Monks Hall

3.7 It will be noted that the 1884 Ordnance Survey Map shows a field and gravel pit to the south-southeast of New Plantation and although this is extant, the land is now largely populated by deciduous trees as shown the identical, current aerial view. (Fig.5)

3.8 There is no accessible archival information on the age of New Plantation although it must be presupposed that it was planted in the mid 19th century and the map indicates mixed woodland although what remains is predominantly deciduous.

3.9 Paragraph 11 of GPA 3 states that protection of the setting of heritage assets need not prevent change; indeed, change may be positive or neutral as is considered to be the case here.

3.10 Examination of the nature, extent and level of a heritage asset's significance are encouraged by GPA 3 but this should be considered proportionately as it is recognizing that where proposals are not likely to be prominent or intrusive the effects on setting may often be limited to the immediate surroundings.

Impact of the proposed scheme on the setting of Monks Hall

3.11 The proposals are modest in scale and with regard to the Hall would be entirely hidden from any viewpoint to the immediate south and west. It should be noted that the south elevation of the west wing of the Hall is a blank brick wall with a crow-stepped gable with four small circular windows lighting first floor rooms and an attic stair. (Fig.2)

3.12 The west elevation of Monks Hall has a two first floor casement windows while ground floor views are truncated by a single-storey brick and flint faced and pantiled outbuilding in close proximity. A red brick boundary wall also encloses the front garden to the south.

3.13 From the Hall in line-of-sight towards the proposed site to the southwest, New Plantation is heavily wooded with mature trees and this woodland does not appear to have been the subject of any recent sylvicultural management (extending also to the tree cover in the modern era to the floor and slopes of the former gravel pit).

3.14 Topographically the 30ft. OD contour coincides with the position of the site while the 20ft. OD contour coincides with the position of the southwest corner of the west wing of Monks Hall. The difference in levels is therefore 10M.

3.15 The photographs taken on 10th May 2021 show the woodland not fully in leaf thereby enabling an indication of the location of Monks Hall to be discerned at a distance.



Fig.6 View of Monks Hall looking due east at NGR 620007 278425 at the northwest corner of New Plantation



Fig.7 View of due east at NGR 620007 278425 with New Plantation to the left showing rising topography with the site in proximity to the far field boundary



Fig.8 Topography at the field corner at NGR 620134 278255 looking due east above the former gravel pit now extensively tree'd



Fig.9 View to the site from the field corner at NGR 620134 278255 looking north-northeast to the right of the field-side bench seat



Fig.10 View from the site to Monks Hall at NGR 620131 278303 visible indistinctly at a distance of approximately 176.5M or 580ft and circled in red.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Following the site inspection of 10th May 2021 and taking into account the environs, general topography, distance of the site from Monks Hall, orientation of the Hall and the long-established tree planting of New Plantation it is contended that the erection of the tree-house in the location proposed would have no visual impact on the heritage significance or the special architectural or historic interest of Monks Hall or its setting.

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May 2021*



ANNEX

Monks Hall – Statutory List Description
[National Heritage List for England]

SYLEHAM TM 27 NW 5/116 Monk's Hall - 29.7.55 -- II*

Manor farmhouse. Main range c.1600; earlier wing set forward to left, remodelled probably early C17, forming L-shape plan to house. Timber framed and plastered, the main range with exposed studding at the front. Roofs mainly plaintiled. 2 storeys and attics. 3-cell main range with cross-passage entry. Some original ovolo-moulded mullioned windows, diamond-leaded, anti a good C17 mullion and transom window to first floor; other windows at front are late C18/early C19 casements with large panes. Good original porch, the upper floor jettied on 3 sides; mutilated balustrading to side openings. Inside the porch the original studded plank entrance door. Very fine stack with 4 enriched circular shafts complete with caps and bases. The projecting wing has a crowstepped brick gable end with circular windows to the upper floors, corbelled eaves pinnacles with ball finials and a stack with an inset panel in the base. One side-wall of this wing has a C17 splayed first floor window.

Interior. The hall has complete oak paneling, much of it original; over the fireplace part of an elaborate early C17 overmantel brought from Ufford Place near Woodbridge c.1940. At lower end of hall a plank and muntin screen with a painted overdoor depicting Solomon's Judgement (said to be late C17). Ovolo-moulded beam and joists to hall ceiling. Parlour has complete pine paneling of early C18 and a contemporary bolection-moulded fireplace with painted overmantel. Parlour chamber has fireplace of similar date, flanked by pilasters, with painted overmantel; good C19 cast iron grate with tiled surround. On both chimney breasts there are remains of fresco paintings (normally concealed and not seen during survey). Earlier wing probably has C15 core: evidence of sooting on some members and also of diamond-mullioned windows. Good first floor stuccoed fireplace with 4-centre arch and quoined surround. There is a small gap between the 2 wings and at first floor level is the remains of C16 incised geometric pargetting on the former outside wall of the earlier range.