



## HERITAGE STATEMENT

MILL HOUSE  
GORAMS MILL LN, LAXFIELD  
WOODBIDGE IP13 8DN

Prepared for:  
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## INTRODUCTION

This document follows the requirements set out by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the *Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990*. It aligns with Historic England's advice (HEAN 1,2 and 9) and the local policy legislation and guidance.

As per NPPF Art. 194, this document describes the significance of the building to a level proportionate to the asset discussed and provides sufficient detail to understand the potential impact of the proposed works.

This study results from an on-site and desk-based assessment of the potential non-designated heritage asset. The document refers to several sources from Historic England, Mid-Suffolk Planning and Heritage Archives and The Mills Archive. Further references can be found at the end of this report.

### **Purpose of this appraisal**

This report conforms to the Pre-application enquiry DC/23/01017 to submit a Heritage Statement as part of a planning application for Mill House. The site is at the end of Goram's Mill Lane, on the outskirts of Laxfield. This is indicated on maps with an orange dot or circle.

The proposal considers replacing the north and south twentieth-century extensions to the original mill cottage for a more sympathetic addition to the north of the site. The mill and outbuildings on the site no longer perform their original use.

It should be noted that despite the Pre-application quotes the Listed Buildings Act 1990, neither the site nor the buildings within it are listed. Neither does apply article 16 of the NPPF, *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*, as the site has not been identified at this point by the planning authority in a local heritage list, a local and neighbourhood plan, or a conservation area appraisal.

Nevertheless, in case the decision-making of this application considers the building or its site to be a non-designated heritage asset, the proposal and its analysis have been developed with the standards expected in such applications. The intent is ultimately to minimise harm to the rural setting and for the new extension to create a positive contribution.

## SITE AND CONTEXT

The site is within a countryside location but is not listed nor locally listed. It is not currently included in Appendix 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan or the Mid Suffolk District Council policies map. But this designation might be considered during the process of this application.

No immediate adjacent listed buildings exist, and the site is not part of the Laxfield conservation area. However, it is highlighted as a pre-1950s development area in the Neighbourhood Plan document, where the field south of Goram's Mill Lane is identified as part of the Local Green Spaces (policy lax 13).

The client owns the plots on either side of the upper part of Goram's Mill Lane. The buildings congregate at this end of the private lane, the only access to the site. Other buildings can be found south in Mill Orchard (also owned by the client) and north (not owned by the client). Please refer to the site and location plans for further detail.

The site slopes towards Goram's Mill Lane and the southwest, where one and two floor outbuildings frame the access to the site. Mill House is at its higher point, with the northern open high-pitch gable sitting predominantly above all. The former windmill, now reduced to its base, sits in front of the old cottage to the southwest.



*Figure 1. Aerial view: Mill House is highlighted in orange, the windmill in a blue circle. Arrow over Goram's Mill Lane*



Figure 2. Top 1840 map, below 1882-83 survey 1882-3 Suffolk Sheet XXXVIII.NW © Nat Lib Scotland

## POTENTIAL NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSET

### History of the area

The oldest map for the area dates from 1840. It includes the building north of Mill House and a mill south of Laxfield. But neither Mill House, the windmill or Goram's Mill Lane had been developed at that time. Its earliest inclusion, noted as Tower Windmill, is on the 1882-3 survey for the Suffolk Sheet XXXVIII.NW.

The Mills Archive dates the windmill as built in 1842. Therefore, it is probable that Mill House was built simultaneously, as it was usual to build a dwelling for the family working the windmill. Throughout the early to mid-1800s, these detached houses were built in the Regency style all across England (see Fig.15).

Historic maps indicate how the outbuildings changed over time. They developed on either side of the end of Goram's Mill Lane to the north and south of the windmill. Despite the addition and demolition of outbuildings over time, a pattern remains; an open space in the centre that creates a visual connection among them and allows them to make the most of the south facing orientation.

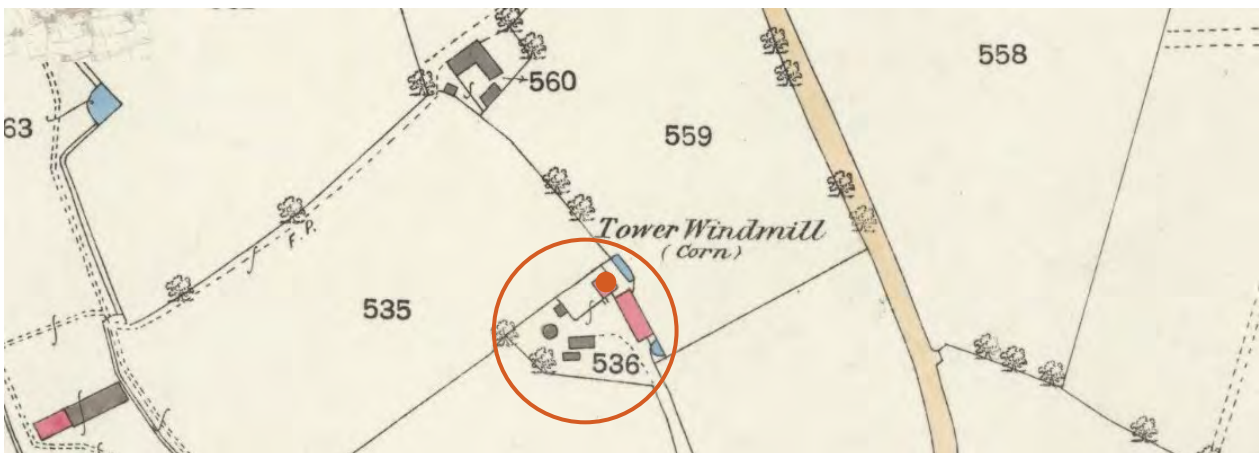


Figure 3. 1883 Suffolk XXXVIII.5© Nat. Lib of Scotland



Figure 4. 1903 Suffolk Sheet XXXVIII.NW © Nat. Lib of Scotland

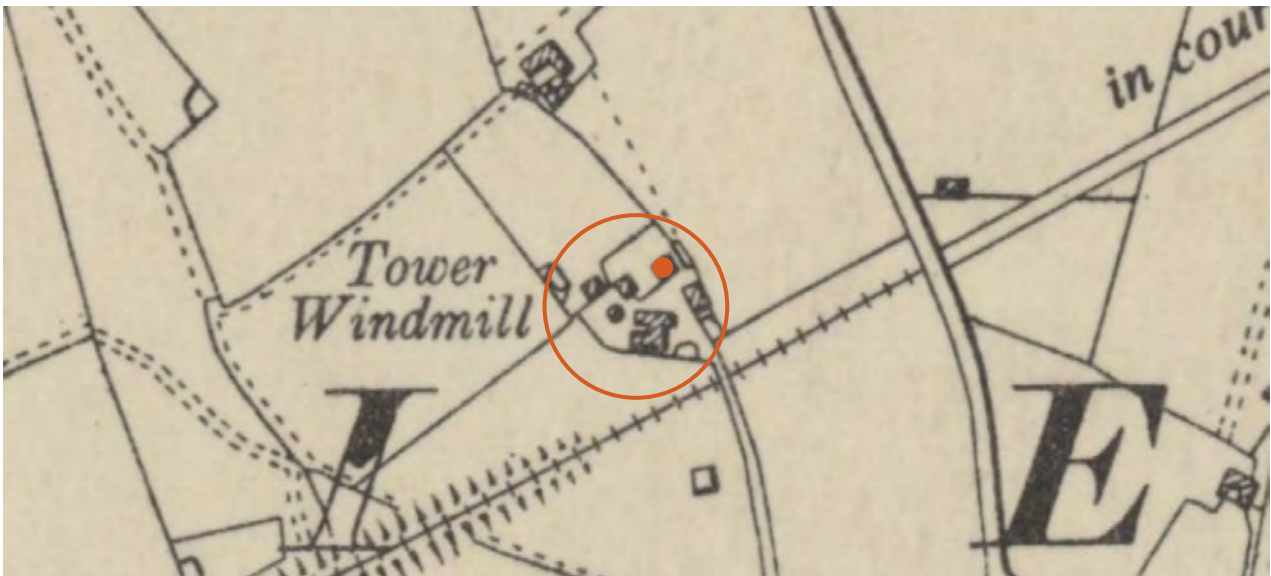


Figure 5. 1949 published 1951 Suffolk Sheet XXXVIIIINW © Nat. Lib of Scotland

### Main historic features

The outbuildings are intimately linked to the land by its use and materiality. The smock windmill ground the locally grown wheat and barley, referred to as corn in maps, for human and cattle consumption. And despite it being reduced to its base by 1947, it took advantage of its position by the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway from 1908 until it closed in 1952, continuing to mill until the 1970s.

The palette of materials across the site is the traditional Suffolk combination of red bricks, pantiles, black timber, corrugated iron and slate. The farmers' dwellings were usually rendered, and the outbuildings clad in black-tarred timber. The former was an extended practice in the 1900s, although also common for early Regency cottages. The latter is a tradition established after the 1830s to protect the wood.

The mill cottage originally followed the style of the Regency villas; a compact plan form with four rooms on each of its two floors under a shallow slate-pitched roof. The position of the original wooden staircase, of thin balusters and spiral end, would have been on the central axis, in line with the door.



Figure 6. Materiality palette from rural Suffolk

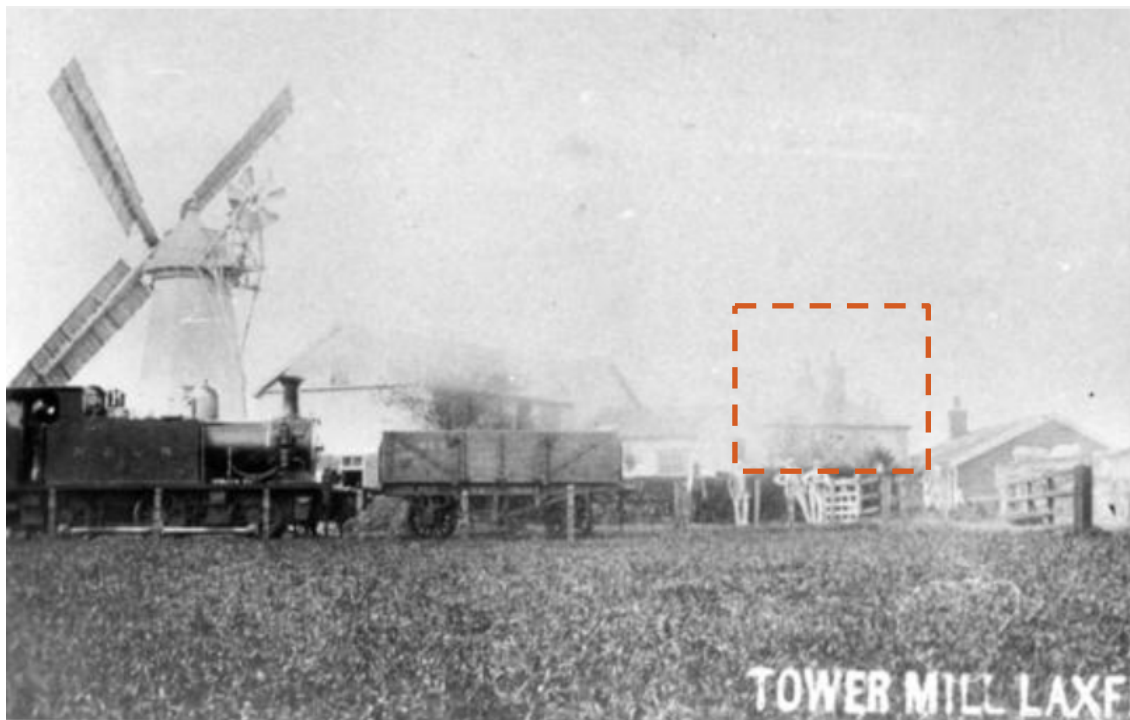


Figure 7. Not dated image between 1908 and 1914. Villa appears faded but in its original form © Mills Archive

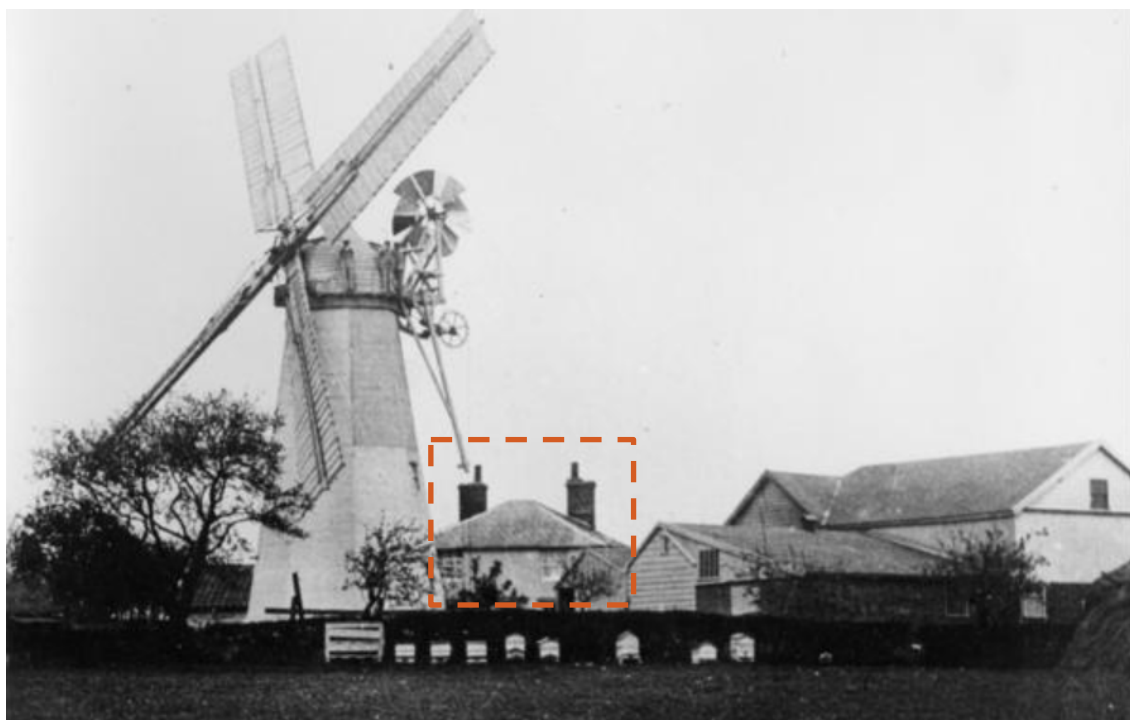


Figure 8. Not dated image, prior to 1914 when the mill sales were removed © Mills Archive



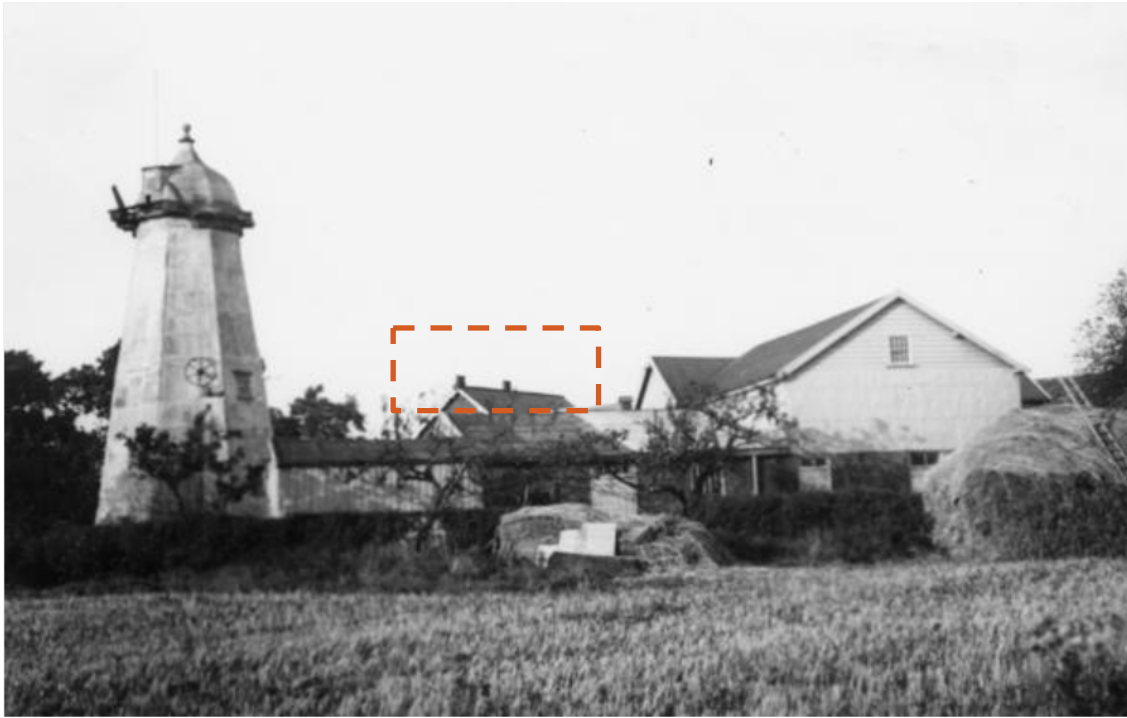


Figure 9. 1937 image shows the roof of the north extension, its two chimneys visible © Mills Archive

### Later alterations

All the buildings on site have changed over time, some being lost and others redeveloped. Unfortunately, the surveys of historical maps were not detailed enough to include the changes to the mill cottage. But the analysis of the building's fabric on site confirmed the north extension is of Edwardian style.

Historic images contributed to understanding the site's evolution based on two facts: the windmill's sails were removed in 1914, and the railway ran from 1908 to 1952. Fig.7-8, between 1908 and 1914, shows the original mill cottage. And therefore, indicating the extension dates from after 1914 is probably a consequence of the economic benefits brought by the railway.

The existing building has been heavily altered, both the Regency cottage and the Edwardian extension. None of the original skirtings, cornices, architraves, doors or windows remain in the cottage. The main entrance was relocated from the central axis to roughly where a window used to be. And rear openings were opened over time.

The existing staircase, which is not in the original location, seems to partially reuse the original Regency slim bannister with added turned wood newel posts in Victorian and Edwardian fashion. But its original place is still marked by the visible timber structure, the post in the bathroom above and the floor tiles which extend towards the entrance.

The tiled floor in the cottage is a later Victorian addition. Tiles only became affordable by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These were used in entrance halls and staircase lobbies. In this case, it might have replaced the flagstones in the ground floor kitchen and scullery.

The planning application for the southern extension dates from 1988. The proposed works also included alterations to the rest of the building. And later internal works included double glazing to windows, DPM under the cottage tiles, and removed floorboards under carpeted areas.

Only one fireplace surround survives in the Edwardian extension, while the other three have been blocked. Skirtings, floorboards and picture rails remain in place, but the windows are now double-glazed. Subsidence and mold issues can be seen from the interior, with cracks extending along walls and ceilings.



*Figure 10. A few examples of cracks found across the Edwardian extension that suffers from subsidence and mold*



Figure 11. The image is probably from 1937. The Edwardian extension appears unpainted behind the mill ©Mills Archive



Figure 12. Undated image showing extended white painting and rendering towards the end of the 20th century



Figure 13. Undated image showing some outbuildings no longer standing, with the base of the mill in the centre ©Mills Archive



Figure 14. The 1998 auction of the house noted a Nissen structure on the grounds.

## ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Definition of the significance

The main character of the buildings on site lies in their rural nature and their need to constantly adapt to serve the purpose of the occupier. The existing fabric, historical maps and images show the marks of continuous evolution, infilled windows and doors, reused timber structures, and ad hoc additions.

The buildings are organically scattered depending on their function and access from Goram's Mill Lane. And although much white painting happened during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Suffolk palette has been gradually recovered with the black timbers and clean brick facades of the outbuildings.

None of the outbuildings is particularly significant at a regional or national level. Pevsner's Architectural Guide for Suffolk mentions a mill in Laxfield working with engine power, but this would have referred to the post mill, south of Laxfield, still standing as noted by a Mills Archive image date 1957. The Goram's mill was reduced to its base in the 1940s and wouldn't be worth of a selective architectural guide.



*Figure 15. The existing fabric shows marks of the continuous evolution of the buildings on site.*

### Historic Significance

Despite losing its original use as a mill, the site retains its significance as a rural compound testimony of the agricultural activities and the economic history of Laxfield. The 20<sup>th</sup>-century additions to the cottage and the changing outbuildings tell the story of the changing nature of the site.

### Architectural significance

The site exemplifies the Victorian English tradition of building a house near a mill for the family running it. The three building typologies, the smock mill, the Regency cottage and the barn, hold the essence of the mill's origins. While the use of the Regency style in a rural area indicates the strength of this fashion.



Figure 16. Left, Peasehall windmill and mill cottage. Right, Ubbeston mill and cottage after back extension, both in Suffolk.

The 20<sup>th</sup>-century extensions to the cottage hold no architectural significance. Neither the internal nor the external detailing and construction are of enough quality. This is underlined by earlier precedents of similar extensions in Laxfield. The grade II listed Field House in Station Road, and even the more minimal example in the High St demonstrate better construction and architectural interest.



Figure 17. Despite the attempt to create a symmetrical design, the extensions vary in width and detailing.



*Figure 18. View of a similar extension to a cottage in Laxfields High St*



*Figure 19. Local Grade II listed building in Laxfield: Field House on Station Road.*

## IMPACT ON SIGNIFICANCE

As noted in *Laxfield Neighbourhood Plan (2018 -2036)*, policy LAX 11, the most important aspect concerning this site is the *Protection of Landscape Setting of Laxfield, to conserve the essential landscape, heritage and rural character of the Neighbourhood Plan Area*. With that purpose, the IF\_DO proposal for Mill House is assessed against the following policies points:

- i) *have regard to the rural and landscape character and the setting of the village;*
- ii) *conserve the open countryside in and around the village area; and*
- iii) *will not have a detrimental visual impact on the key features of the important views identified on the Policies Map*

The position of the site is in the outskirts of the village. The heavy vegetation only allows for a partial view of the village's roofs and the church tower. Similarly, the buildings on site cannot be seen from the village, even if the site is situated slightly higher up than the village. Therefore, no views would be affected.

The proposed new extension continue the tradition of organically growing around the central open space between the mill and the cottage. They take advantage of the land sloping towards the west, with the shorter building at the highest point and the bulk of the new extension on a lower ground level.

This is a new phase on the evolution of the site that extends the residential use of the original cottage (which has always remained a dwelling). But the materiality proposed continues the Suffolk tradition of agricultural buildings by using black timber cladding, timber structure and corrugated metal.



Figure 20. Aerial view of Laxfield showing the dense vegetation between the site and the village



For further details on the proposal, please refer to the Design and Access Statement and the drawings enclosed in the application.

### Demolition of 20<sup>th</sup>-century wings

The loss of the Edwardian and the 1988 extensions won't affect the architectural significance of the cottage or its setting. Neither of these constructions holds architectural significance. Instead, their demolition will offer further opportunities.

The mill cottage, one of the oldest buildings on the site, will recover its original scale and volume. The demolition of the extensions will open up views to the sky and the fields on either side of the building, bringing back the experience of buildings dotted around the land in constant visual connection with the open space.

A further benefit is the removal of the poor-quality Edwardian extension. This will save from costly structural and construction repairs to solve the subsidence and mold issues. While the new sustainable construction will offer further energy savings in the running of the building.



Figure 21. Pre-app illustration indicating demolition and reinstatement of the villa's original proportions © IF\_DO

## New Build

The proposal corrects the imposing position currently taken by the Edwardian extension, with its high pitch on the highest point of the sloping site. While the new extensions by the cottage are modest in character giving back the right weight to the old dwelling.

The new extension results from a compromise between the heights of the existing buildings and current building standards. Limited by the established regulations for minimum heights, it works with the slope of the ground, positioning its highest volume away from the cottage.

A lower transition volume connects to the Regency cottage. This is mainly a roof over a glass void that allows views through and to the landscape beyond to the north of the site. This strategy facilitates residential use across the old building and the new extension without imposing on the architecture of the cottage.

The traditional Suffolk palette transforms the addition in one of the outbuildings in this rural compound. While its design informs this is a residential rather than an agricultural building. Its materiality integrates the new extension with the context, contributing to the visitor's landscape experience.

The resulting visual experience is of a contemporary building integrated with its rural context. The soft landscaping merges its perimeter with the surrounding meadows. The Suffolk materiality palette makes it part of the rural compound, and its design informs of its actual use and date.

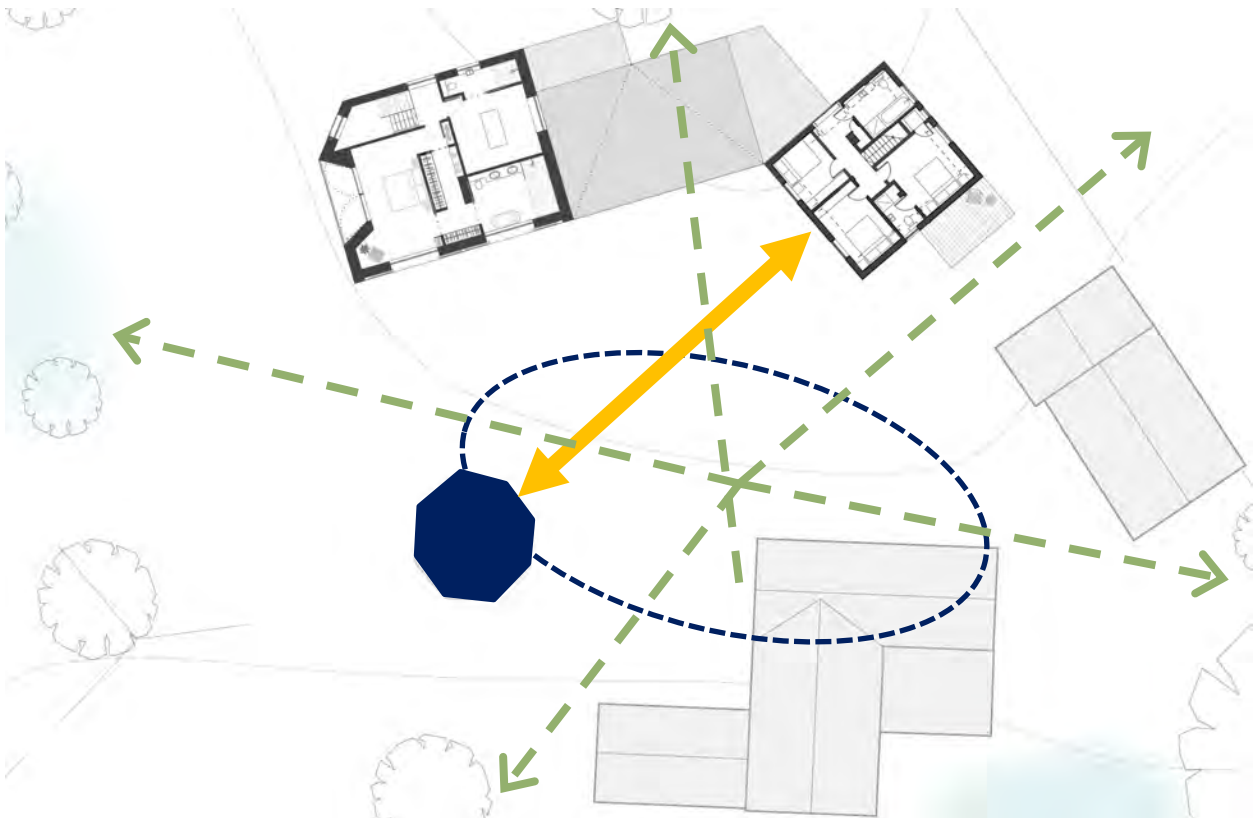


Figure 22. Diagram based on IF\_DO proposal for the site (first-floor plan) ©IF\_DO

## SUMMARY

As advised in Historic England's Note 9, *The Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Farm Buildings*, the *well-informed understanding of the farmstead's evolution results in a high-quality design and a positive contribution to its rural context*. This proposal considers *the extent of past change*. It identifies the opportunity to *reinstate lost features and to develop the site appropriately*.

The proposal for the demolition of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century extensions and the new construction continues the tradition of the site to demolish and build to adapt to the circumstances of its occupier. This development is an opportunity for the renewal of the area with a better integration into the landscape whilst reducing the energy consumption and maximising the sunlight on site.

The demolition of structures of no architectural significance allows for the reinstatement of the original proportions of the mill cottage. While the new extension creates a more sympathetic nexus to the Regency building. Rather than stretching its profile or adding alien features, as the 20<sup>th</sup>-century extensions do. The new extension creates space between the two and uses the outbuildings' materiality to create a hierarchy.

The proposal continues the historic adaptive character to demolish and grow based on the needs and activities of the occupier. And while the new extension follows current building standards, it adjusts its height to the scale and massing of the other buildings on site. And the lower transition building helps to attach to the historic cottage while avoiding competing with it.

Following Historic England's *Farmstead Assessment Framework*, the new extension responds sensitively to the historic site and retains its connection with the landscape. The proposed scheme understands its growing and materiality patterns. As a result, it protects and maintains the site's rural character and corrects the current predominance of the residential building while allowing for intermittent long-distance visuals.

## REFERENCES

The National Library of Scotland, Explore georeferenced maps - Map images - National Library of Scotland

Historic England, Farmstead Assessment Framework, Informing sustainable development and the conservation of traditional farmsteads.

Mill images from The Mills Archive

<https://catalogue.millsarchive.org/informationobject/browse?sort=lastUpdated&view=table&sq0=%22Goram%27s+Mill%2C+Laxfield%22&sf0=place&topLod=0>

<https://suffolklandscape.org.uk/glossary/colour-washed/>

<https://suffolklandscape.org.uk/glossary/pan-tiles/>

Laxfield Neighbourhood Plan (2018 -2036)

Laxfield-NP-Built-Environment-Character-Assessment

Historic England, Farmstead Assessment Framework

Historic England Advice Note 9 - The Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Farm Buildings

The Hold, Ipswich:

HB26/4215/676 Premises in Halesworth and Laxfield

HB26/4215/951 Messuage with barn, millhouse, gardens, mill hill (on which windmill formerly stood),

Mill Way and land (2a.) in Laxfield, copyhold of manor of Laxfield

HB26/12436/37 Windmill with stores, machinery, tackle and going gear, with messuage and land (6.5a.) in Laxfield

HD2833/1/SC262/28 SC262/28 Gorams Mill, Laxfield

FDA163/A1/1b Laxfield Tithe Map 1840

FDA163/A1/1a Laxfield Tithe Apportionment 1840

FDA/163/A/2/2 Instrument of Altered Laxfield Tithe Apportionment dated 5 Mar 1929

1117/262/4 Mill house, outbuildings, original mill base and garden, grounds and paddocks of 6.5a

K681/2/77/186 Windmills

K681/2/77/185 K681/2/77/185

K453/80 LAXFIELD: post mill