

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT & HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Project: Proposed 1.5 Storey Rear Extension via Structural Glass Link

Site Address: 3 Gravel Hill Cottages, Blagrove Lane, Reading, Berkshire RG47DY

Property Status: Grade II Listed Building

Local Planning Authority: Reading Borough Council

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 Overview of the Proposal

This statement accompanies a joint application for Full Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent (LBC). The application seeks approval for a 1.5 storey rear extension to the host property, a Grade II listed cottage. The project has been designed with a high level of architectural sensitivity, utilizing a lightweight structural glass link to connect the new living space to a non-historic, later 20th-century lean-to addition. Through this execution, the original historic envelope of the listed cottage remains completely untouched and physically unaltered.

Throughout the evolution of the design, a number of key principles have remained constant:

- preservation of the historic listed cottage;
- retention of the simple agricultural character of the original building;
- avoidance of imitation historic architecture;
- clear architectural distinction between old and new;
- minimal intervention into historic fabric;
- enhancement of the wider setting through removal of visually intrusive modern outbuildings.

The proposed extension is located wholly to the rear of the existing cottage and has been designed so that it remains concealed from the principal public approach along Blagrove Lane. As a result, appreciation of the historic frontage of the listed building remains unchanged and continues to define the character of the property.

Rather than reproducing historic detailing, the proposal adopts a restrained contemporary architectural language. This approach reflects current conservation best practice by ensuring that the extension is clearly legible as a modern addition while remaining respectful of the listed building.

A significant aspect of the proposal is its relationship with the site's extant planning permission for a detached double garage. The Local Planning Authority has previously accepted the introduction of a contemporary architectural language within the curtilage of the listed building. The proposed extension has deliberately evolved from that approved design, adopting the same principles of simple massing, restrained detailing and high-quality contemporary materials.

Consequently, the extension should not be viewed as an isolated architectural intervention but as the continuation of an established and approved design strategy for the site.

The proposal seeks to provide modern family accommodation comprising:

- an open-plan kitchen and dining space;
- rear access to garden;
- a new principal bedroom suite;
- enhanced natural daylight throughout the new accommodation;
- improved circulation between historic and contemporary spaces.

The extension remains visually subservient to the listed cottage through its siting, scale, material palette and architectural restraint.

The development preserves the significance of the listed building, enhances its long-term viability as a family home and represents a carefully considered contemporary addition to an important historic asset.

1.2 National and Local Policy Framework

The proposals have been assessed against national criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2026) Section 20 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment), and local planning policies enforced by Reading Borough Council, specifically:

- **Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment):** Ensuring that applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their setting.
- **Policy EN6 (New development in a historic context):** In areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development.
- **Policy CC7 (Design and the public realm):** Developments will.... respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm.
- **Design Guide to House Extensions SPD:** Adhering to strict standards of subordination, scale, and spatial harmony within residential contexts.

2.0 SITE CONTEXT

2.1 Site Location

The application site occupies a substantial rural plot on Blagrove Lane and comprises a detached Grade II listed timber-framed cottage set within extensive domestic gardens and open countryside.

The dwelling occupies a prominent yet informal position within its generous curtilage, with the principal elevation addressing Blagrove Lane and the majority of the garden extending to the rear.

Unlike many listed buildings situated within tightly constrained village settings, the application property benefits from significant open space around the building. This allows carefully designed additions to be accommodated without compromising the appreciation of the historic structure from the public realm.

The existing arrangement includes a number of modern ancillary structures to the rear of the site which possess little architectural merit and do not contribute positively to the significance or setting of the listed building.

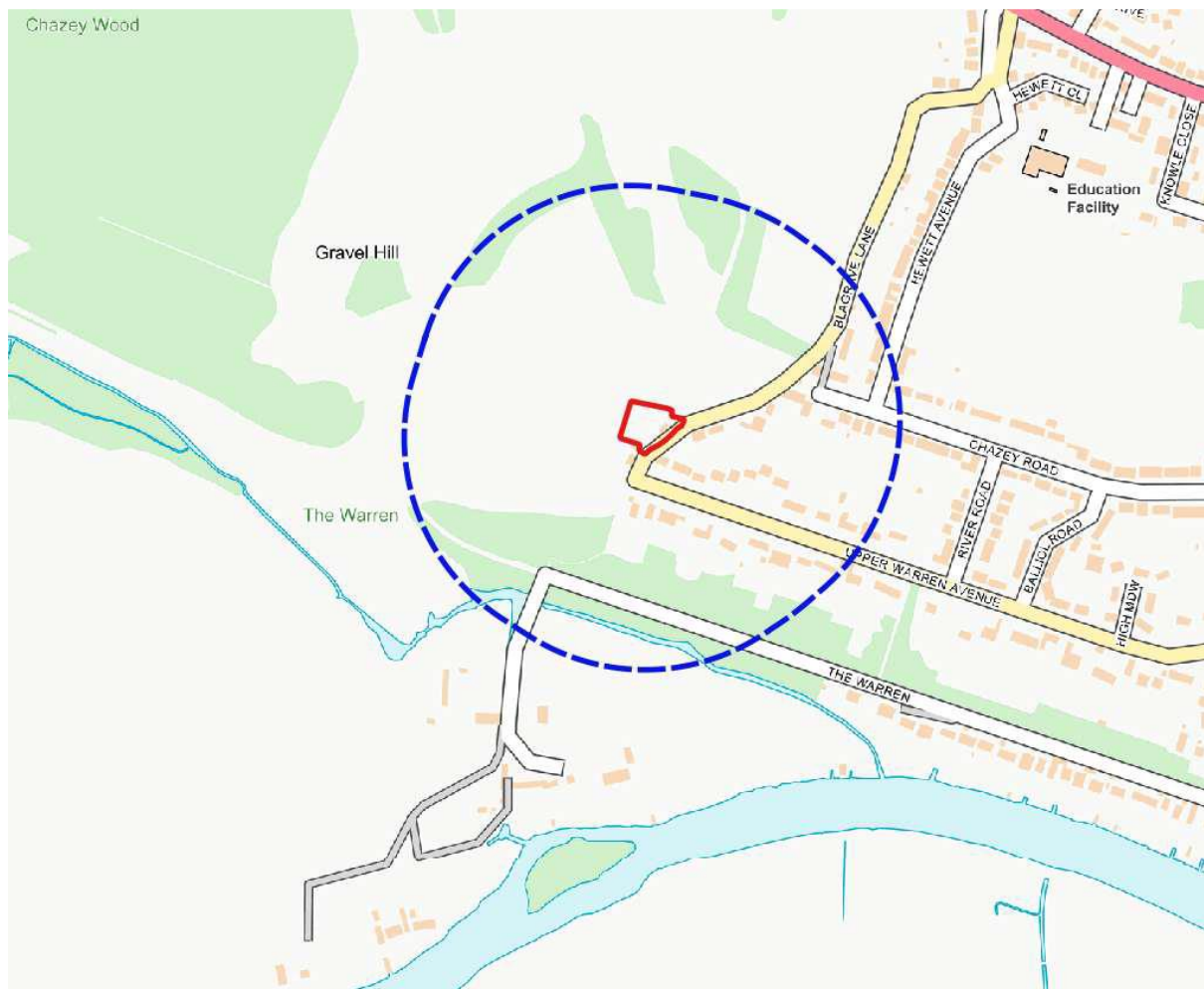


Figure 1. The application site and 250m radius study area (dashed blue line). OS PMCL AC0000855630

2.2 Landscape Setting

The cottage occupies an attractive transitional position between the village edge and open countryside. Long-distance views are primarily experienced across surrounding farmland, whilst shorter views from Blagrove Lane are focused on the traditional front elevation of the listed building.

The rear garden is expansive and largely private. Existing mature trees and planting contribute significantly to the landscape character and help contain views of development within the curtilage.

The proposed extension has been deliberately located entirely within this private rear landscape where it can be accommodated without affecting the established public character of the lane.



Fig. 2 (Google maps image)

2.3 Evolution of the Listed Building

A proportionate Heritage Statement has been prepared by Bristol & Bath Heritage Consultancy Ltd to accompany the applications (BBHC 2026) and which should be read alongside this statement. This demonstrates that, as with many historic rural dwellings, the cottage has not remained static.

Evidence within the existing fabric demonstrates that it has undergone successive phases of alteration and adaptation reflecting changing patterns of occupation and domestic life.

Changes over time include:

- historic repairs to the timber frame;
- replacement of thatched roof with tiles;
- addition of dormers;

- addition or rebuilding of chimney stacks;
- replacement windows;
- alterations to internal layouts;
- construction of the existing outshut;
- both earlier (but now demolished) and modern ancillary structures within the curtilage.

The building therefore already tells a story of gradual evolution rather than preservation as a single moment in time. The current proposal should be understood as the next carefully considered stage within that continuing evolution.



Fig. 3 The key southeast facing elevation of 3, Blagrove Lane, viewed from the lane. OS PMCL AC0000855630



Fig. 4 View looking along Blagrove Lane from the east/northeast. OS PMCL AC0000855630



Fig. 5 View looking along Blgrave Lane from the south, with existing garage and attached lean-to structures seen to the left of the cottage. OS PMCL AC0000855630



Fig. 6 Drone view showing the northwest elevation without the clutter of buildings and vegetation in the foreground. OS PMCL AC0000855630



Fig. 7 Ground level view from within the rear part of the curtilage, showing the clutter of buildings and vegetation that currently partly obscures views of the northwest elevation from the northwest of the extant garage. OS PMCL AC0000855630



Fig. 8 View from the public right of way to the northwest of the listed building, showing the extant garage and attached lean-to structures and cherry tree partly obscuring and filtering views of the timber framing. OS PMCL AC0000855630

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of the relevant planning policy context.

3 Gravel Hill Cottages is located on the boundary of Reading Borough Council. It is included on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) as a Grade II listed building (listed as '3, Blagrove Lane'; List Entry No. 1113399)

The site does not include any other policy areas although there are several designations on the ground to the South, as shown on the map. None of these are affected by works at 3 Gravel Hill Cottages.

15/2/1994 PL/93/0060 (listed building consent): Installation of door into existing doorway opening of lobby on front elevation. Door to be half glazed, half panelled.

04/11/2022 PL/22/0643 (planning application) and PL/22/0644 (listed building consent). Internal alterations. Replacement and repair of timber doors and windows. New garage/car port and log store, Replacement oil tank and new external boiler. Removal of concrete apron around house and creation of new French drain. Drawings HBL/26/5 and 6 show how the bulk of this proposal would have appeared alongside the listed building (including its visibility from Blagrove Lane on the south east elevation). On this current scheme for the proposed extension, this garage development would not take place. Drawing HBL/26/7 illustrates that the proposed bulk of the current proposal has considerably less impact on the listed building.

PL/25/1602 - Pre-application advice to plant a hedge to replace existing fence. Advice provided.

07/05/2026 PL/26/0487 (pre-planning application). Advice is sought for a two-storey rear extension connected to the listed building by a single storey link.

3.2 Pre-planning application advice and response.

3.21 Overview of response and amendments

The pre-planning application response was generally as follows:

- The proposal was too large and bulky; due to its footprint, height, scale and massing, the proposal would not be supported on heritage grounds.
- The proposal was not subservient to the listed building; it would block and compete with the original rear (northwest) elevation of the listed building;
- Its gable ends would compete with the architecture of the listed building;
- The proposed roof form and scale appeared like a converted barn which would conceal the form, character and legibility of the listed building...It would also result in visual harm and disruption;
- A single storey extension would probably be the only type of extension to be approved.
- Erection of a barn-like structure would not be supported as it would not reinstate a lost value; it would bring a pastiche element to the listed curtilage. However, a contemporary appearance could be acceptable.

We have taken the comments on board and have:

- Reduced the building from two-storey to one-and-a-half storey height, reduced the massing of the roof form, replaced the competing gables with small dormers, removed all dormers from one side of the roof and considerably reduced the size of the extension's footprint and the bulk of the building generally.
- The design of the link structure has been refined to a low-rise, lightweight glazed construction which creates clear separation between the historic fabric and new extension, and enables views through to the rear elevation of the listed building from the north/northwest to be retained.
- We have set the building into the ground and, along with the addition of existing ground levels, have made the presentation of drawings clearer, especially in views in which we will be replacing the approved garage/log store with the proposed extension.
- We propose that a single-storey extension is not the only practical approach and include numerous examples of similar extensions to Listed Buildings that have been successful, and illustrate generally accepted models for this type of extension.
- We have applied a more contemporary approach to the design of the extension.
- Clarification was required regarding the layout and whether the extension has the capacity to operate as a separate unit.

3.22 Detailed response to pre-planning application advice.

3.23 The pre-application report noted concerns that the roof form and scale resembled a "converted barn" that could conceal the legibility of the cottage. While the original proposal was already a low-profile two-storey scheme with a hipped roof—inherently distinct from the massive, full two-storey gable ends typical of agricultural barns—the following structural concessions have been integrated into this full application:

- **Established 1-Metre Ridge Hierarchy:** The proposed extension actively defers to the historic host building by establishing a clear visual hierarchy. In line with established UK planning principles and local design standards, the extension's roofline features a minimum of **1-metre ridge drop** below the main cottage ridge. This substantial step-down ensures that the extension remains strictly subordinate in scale, allowing the original profile, massing, and historic roof form of the listed cottage to retain its architectural dominance (see appendix 5.)
- **Lowered eaves levels:** The height of the eaves has been significantly reduced to finish lower than those of the existing cottage, whereas they were previously higher.
- **Topographical Integration:** By utilizing the site's natural downward sloping ground, the 1-metre ridge drop means the entire structure sits deeply and humbly within the landscape, sitting lower than the previously approved garage scheme on a similar footprint.

- **Asymmetrical Window Modification:** In a major concession to strip away visual bulk, **all dormer windows have been completely removed from one side of the roof slope.** Replacing these dormers with a clean, unbroken tile expanse dramatically slims down the roof's profile, eliminating any perceived visual disruption.
- **Retention of Hipped Form:** The hipped roof ensures that the roof slopes away from the host cottage on all sides. This significantly reduces the visual volume and prevents a harsh, competing gable silhouette.
- **Removal of pitched overhangs:** Pitched overhangs were proposed for solar shading on the south-west and north-west elevations. These have now been removed to significantly reduce the extensions mass.
- **Removal of covered porch to glazed link:** The large dormer style porch to the glazed link has been removed.
- **Reduction in first floor bedroom and removal of balcony;** The length of the first floor bedroom has been reduced by 1 metre, providing a visual reduction in volume at the first floor level.
- **Reduction in mass:** The result of the alterations equates to a total reduction of 27% of the ground floor footprint and 13% reduction of the first floor.

3.24 The conservation officer explicitly stated that the "proposed timber cladding is not an issue in itself." Given that this material palette (brick plinth, timber cladding, clay tiles) exactly matches the already approved garage on this footprint, the extension simply maintains site consistency while reading as a modest, secondary domestic wing.

3.3 Structural Separation and Legibility: The Glazed Link

3.31 To guarantee the preservation of the listed asset's legibility, the application maintains the generous length of the glazed link as presented at the pre-application stage. Rather than encroaching close to the historic core, the link provides a deliberate and necessary architectural separation. This length ensures that the timber-clad extension stands entirely independent of the cottage silhouette, allowing the rendered rear envelope to 'breathe'. Furthermore, the length enables the structure to seamlessly absorb the site's downward sloping topography, providing a gentle internal transition that keeps the extension fully subservient to the host dwelling.

3.32 In accordance with Historic England's guidance for extending listed buildings in 'A Guide for Owners of Listed Buildings' (Historic England 2016), the glazed link acts as an architectural 'visual break' that ensures the extension is separate, subservient and clearly 'reads' as different to the historic cottage. Its complete transparency ensures that the original, plaster-rendered external envelope of the cottage remains fully visible and legible. A viewer can therefore instantly distinguish between the 17th-century timber-framed building and the 21st-century addition.

3.33 From a structural preservation standpoint, the glazed link offers a highly sympathetic, minimally invasive connection method:

- **Fabric Preservation:** The link does not touch any historic fabric. Rather, it extends from the 20th century outshut only.

- **Reversibility:** The junction is designed to be fully reversible. Should the extension ever be removed in the future, the rear wall of the cottage (20th-century outshot) can be restored to its original state without permanent loss of fabric.

3.34 The lightweight glass link also allows the extension to sit on a similar site to that of the already approved double garage and log store.

3.4 Fenestration Strategy: Honest Contrast vs. Pastiche Replication

3.41 The proposed fenestration style for the extension intentionally utilizes large, fixed 'picture-style' windows rather than traditional small-paned casements. This is a deliberate heritage strategy, designed to maintain clear architectural honesty and to prevent any further 'pastiche' imitation of the historic asset.

3.42 Introducing small-paned, divided windows onto a modern timber-clad extension would create a false historical narrative, confusing the timeline and legibility of the property. By contrast, the clean, minimal lines of the picture windows serve two distinct conservation purposes:

- **Architectural Subordination:** The slim, large-paned frames read as a quiet, contemporary addition that does not try to compete with or mimic the intricate craftsmanship of the original cottage's timber-framed windows.
- **Visual Lightness:** Paired with the removal of the dormer windows on one side of the roof, the large expanses of glass help break up the massing of the timber cladding, making the overall structure feel lighter and more secondary to the host dwellinghouse.
- **Stylistic Consistency:** The minimal framing of the picture windows mirrors the frameless architectural language of the glazed link, creating a cohesive, high-quality modern wing.

3.5 Clarification of Proposed Use: Multi-Generational Living

3.51 The pre-application report requested clarification regarding the layout and whether the extension has the capacity to operate as a separate unit. The applicant categorically clarifies that the proposed extension is intended solely for use as ancillary living accommodation to the main dwelling. It will function entirely as an integrated part of a single-family home.

3.52 The layout has been thoughtfully designed to facilitate multi-generational family living, enabling an elderly/dependent family member to occupy the ground floor of the original cottage. This would allow them to live safely and closely alongside the core family unit.

3.53 The family member residing in the cottage will be fully integrated with and dependent upon the extension for daily family life. The entire site will share a single primary kitchen, single utility meters, the main garden curtilage, and a single vehicular access point. The applicant is fully agreeable to a standard planning condition being attached to any granting of permission, explicitly restricting the extension's use to purposes ancillary to the main house.

3.54 This arrangement provides profound heritage benefits:

- **Fabric Preservation:** The original cottage lacks the space and structural capacity to house modern, open-plan family facilities without causing harm to its historic timber frame and plaster fabric.

- **Low-Impact Use:** The extension will absorb the heavy demands of modern family living (main living and kitchen hub). Through the relocation of the kitchen and sensitive removal of all plumbing inlets and outlets, the historic cottage can be put into a quiet, low-impact residential use (see appendix 2). This arrangement has been assessed as the most suitable configuration as its low impact use will promote the long-term conservation of the cottage.

3.6 Evolution of the Architectural Language

The current proposal has not sought to introduce a new architectural approach. Instead, the extension deliberately develops the design philosophy already accepted through the approved garage.

The proposal adopts the same underlying principles:

- simplicity rather than ornament;
- clarity of form;
- honest expression of materials;
- lightweight connections;
- contemporary detailing;
- visual subservience to the listed cottage.

Consequently, the extension should be understood as the continuation of an established architectural language rather than a separate design exercise.

3.7 Comparison of the Approved Garage and Proposed Extension

Although differing in function, both buildings are founded upon the same architectural principles.

Building Location

Historic England (HE 2016 Guide for Owners of Listed Buildings) advises that extensions will have less effect on the historic home if built onto the back and not seen from the front. The settings and impact assessment contained within the accompanying Heritage Statement (BBHC 2026) demonstrates that the current proposals fulfil this brief, and that the extension will be concealed entirely behind the key view of the principal southeast elevation from Blagrove Lane, unlike the proposed garage structure which would appear to the side of this elevation (BBHC 2026, Fig. 29). The heritage analysis also demonstrates that the current proposals will have slightly less impact than construction of the approved garage would in views of the rear (northwest) elevation about which the Conservation Officer expressed concerns in the pre-application feedback (BBHC Fig. 27).

Building Form

The approved garage is expressed as a simple, uncluttered volume with a clearly defined roof form.

The proposed extension adopts precisely the same approach.

Rather than breaking the building into numerous competing elements, the extension is composed as a single clear form positioned behind the historic cottage and lower and smaller than it.

This simplicity allows the listed building to remain visually dominant.

Material Palette

The approved garage introduced a limited palette of contemporary materials selected for their durability, quality and visual restraint.

The proposed extension follows the same philosophy.

This restrained palette establishes a clear relationship between the approved garage and the proposed extension whilst maintaining a deliberate distinction from the traditional materials of the cottage. The materials and colour palette enable the new building to form a modest backdrop against the old in the limited views in which it is experienced from the public realm, ensuring it remains subordinate. Historic England advocates the use of contrasting materials in a modern design in its guide for owners of listed buildings, whilst the timber-clad nature of the extension is also appropriately reflective of the historic context of barns and agricultural outbuildings set within the north and northwestern curtilage of the cottage on 18th- and 19th- century maps (i.e. BBHC 2026, Figs 4-6).

3.8 Summary

The extant garage permission demonstrates that the Local Planning Authority has already accepted the principle of introducing carefully designed contemporary architecture within the curtilage of the listed cottage.

The current proposal builds upon that accepted approach. It does not introduce a new architectural language, nor does it seek to compete with the historic building. Instead, it represents the logical continuation of an architectural strategy that has already been established and endorsed through previous planning approval.

The proposed extension should therefore be viewed as part of a coherent and evolving design approach that respects the significance of the listed building whilst providing high quality contemporary accommodation appropriate for modern family life.

4. HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 Introduction

A detailed significance assessment has been undertaken as part of the Heritage Statement (Section 4 of BBHC 2026) which should be read alongside this document. This examines the significance of the cottage in terms of the package of heritage interests which make up heritage significance, as defined by the NPPF, namely Archaeological, Architectural/Artistic and Historic interest, along with the contribution setting makes to significance. These are summarised briefly here (see Section 4 of BBHC 2026 for further details).

4.11 Archaeological interest

The building clearly contains much evidence, vested within its fabric, for its use and adaptation over time and therefore worthy of further investigation. Scientific dating and investigation of its fabric offer high potential to better understand the date of its original construction and the unresolved question of whether it developed as a single cottage or was originally two cottages made into one. A good degree of the building's overall heritage significance is therefore vested in its archaeological interest.

4.12 Architectural and artistic interest

The building is a simple rural agricultural workers cottage in the local vernacular, which has been modified over time with the loss of some features (thatch) and addition of dormers, new chimneys and extensions. The southeast and northwest facing timber-framed elevations retain a good deal of their historic character and considerable aesthetic appeal, and represent the most important architectural elements. Architectural/artistic (or perhaps more accurately aesthetic) interest is therefore considered to comprise a good deal of the asset's overall heritage significance.

4.13 Historic Interest

The building has considerable time depth, being likely of at least late 17th-century date, and has historic interest in its association with Chazey Farm and the Mapledurham Estate of the Blount family, as attested in Section 3 of the Heritage Statement (BBHC 2026). It also has an illustrative historic value as a surviving example of an agricultural workers' cottage of the late 17th-century which has been adapted over time. Along with the later cottages at 1 and 2 Gravel Hill it has some historic group value as a small surviving cluster of agricultural workers' cottages associated with Chazey Farm in what is now a largely modern setting of housing ranged along Blagrove Lane and Upper Warren Avenue.

4.14 Setting

The cottage's setting makes a modest contribution to the overall significance of the listed building, with Blagrove Lane and the building's immediate curtilage offering the best viewpoints from which its principal architectural and historic significances can be appreciated. In longer views the cottage is largely obscured by buildings and vegetation such that its timber-framing is not typically on view and the roof form and chimneys are partly concealed. As a humble agricultural worker's cottage, the original fenestration was small and limited in extent, and the building is partly terraced into the sloping ground at the rear, where historic maps suggest a range of agricultural outbuilding(s) surrounded the northern and northwestern elevations, such that it is clear no designed views out from the building itself were incorporated during its construction that were intended to take advantage of the cottage's rural setting.

4.15 Design Response

Every aspect of the proposed extension has been informed by the significance identified above. Accordingly, the proposal: - preserves key views and dominance of the principal elevation; - retains the dominance of the original roofscape; - necessitates no intervention into significant historic fabric; - remains visually subordinate; - clearly distinguishes old from new; - enhances the wider setting through removal of poor quality modern outbuildings; - continues the contemporary architectural language already accepted by the Local Planning Authority through the approved garage. The proposal therefore responds directly to the heritage significance of the listed building rather than imposing an unrelated architectural solution.

4.2 The Later 20th-Century outshut

To the north east of the original cottage sits a single-storey lean-to extension. Historical map analysis and physical inspection confirm this element was added in the mid-20th century. Constructed using standard modern common bricks and generic modern rafters, this addition holds no architectural significance, historic fabric, or cultural value. It forms a neutral-to-negative element in the overall historical story of the property and acts as the designated intervention zone for this application.

4.3 Summary

The significance of 3 Gravel Hill Cottages lies principally in the simplicity and aesthetic appearance of its vernacular form, the archaeological and historic values vested in its surviving historic fabric and its rural setting. The proposal has been designed to preserve these qualities. Rather than competing with the listed building, the extension has been deliberately conceived as a secondary contemporary addition located entirely to the rear of the cottage in line with Historic England guidance. It is considered that the proposal enables the long-term conservation of the significance of the designated heritage asset whilst enabling the continued sustainable occupation of the property as a family home.

5. THE DESIGN COMPONENT

5.1 Appearance and Material Selection

The material palette is chosen to represent a clear, honest architectural dialogue between 21st-century design and traditional Berkshire vernacular, avoiding historic pastiche:

- **Base Level (Plinth):** The extension sits on a traditional **red stock brick plinth** laid with an appropriate **lime mortar mix**. This grounds the structure and references the heavy masonry character of the host asset.
- **Superstructure Walls:** Above the plinth, the walls are clad in **timber** running in a clean **horizontal orientation**. This creates a lightweight, distinct texture.
- **Roof Covering:** The hipped roof is dressed in traditional **hand-made clay tiles**, bridging the transition between old and new by mirroring the established local tile roofing palette.
- **The Link:** The connector consists of low-reflectivity **structural glass** featuring ultra-slim frames. This maximizes transparency, preserves the spatial legibility of the cottage's rear profile, and provides a clear visual break between architectural eras.
- **Solar Shading Window Shutters**

The fenestration strategy incorporates external shutters. In accordance with Historic England's advice on adapting historic buildings to climate change, external shutters provide a highly effective, low-impact, and fully reversible method of managing thermal comfort. They allow the new structure to mitigate solar heat gain and prevent overheating during peak summer months, therefore reducing the reliance on energy-intensive air conditioning systems.

The external shutters serve a dual heritage and architectural purpose: Traditional Passive Solar Shading: By blocking solar radiation before it hits the glass, the shutters provide the necessary passive shading required for modern building regulations, while utilizing a traditional architectural device that is deeply rooted in rural vernacular design.

Volumetric Cohesion: When closed, the shutters blend seamlessly into the main timber cladding. This effectively masks the modern picture windows from view when not in use, temporarily giving the extension the quiet, unpunctured additional appearance of a secondary outbuilding, reflecting the historic context established in the Heritage Statement (BBHC 2026), further softening its impact on the cottage's setting.

To achieve this vital solar shading, the applicant originally explored incorporating a roof overhang. However, recognizing the high priority the council places on minimizing development bulk within the curtilage of the listed building, the applicant has proactively withdrawn the roof overhang from the scheme.

By removing the overhang, the physical footprint, roof massing, and overall volume of the extension have been strictly compressed to the absolute minimum. The introduction of flush, external shutters represent a major design compromise: it delivers the exact same sustainable climate-resilience and shading benefits as an overhang, but with zero increase to the building's footprint, volume, or shadow line.

The powder coated aluminium shutters will completely omit the use of uPVC or synthetic composites, ensuring a traditional and highly sympathetic finish that respects the host listed asset.

- **External Air Sourced Heat Pump (ASHP)**

To future-proof the hot water and heating system to the extension and ensure its long-term environmental sustainability, an ASHP is to be installed.

ASHP to be fully MCS-Certified and compliant with acoustic standards to prevent any noise disruption to the setting of the historic asset. The ASHP is to be placed to the rear of the new extension which will allow the modern heating infrastructure to be completely hidden away from the historic cottage fabric, protecting the original structure from heavy service installations. High-quality timber acoustic screening is to be incorporated around the ASHP .

The ASHP is significantly smaller than the approval already given to replace the old steel oil tank with a new bunded oil tank and the internal oil boiler with a new external boiler, both situated closely and directly behind the cottage.

5.2 Materials Palette & Specifications

5.21. Overview

This document supports the Listed Building Consent (LBC) application. It details the proposed physical materials, their finishes, sourcing, and installation methodologies. Every material has been selected to ensure consistency with the special architectural and historic interest of the building.

5.22. External Walling & Masonry

Proposed Brickwork

- **Item:** Facing bricks for the plinth to the new extension.
- **Material:** Handmade clay brick.
- **Source/Manufacturer:** TBS South Berkshire multi red clay brick
- **Colour & Texture:** Soft red/multi-orange, light texture with slight variations, matching the existing main building brick plinth
- **Dimensions:** 215mm x 102.5mm x 65mm.

5.23. Mortar & Pointing

- **Item:** Bedding and pointing mortar.
- **Composition:** 1:3 mix of Non-Hydraulic Lime Putty (Lime Green or similar) and well-graded local sharp sand. Strictly no Portland cement.
- **Colour:** Buff/off-white, matching the historic weathered mortar matrix.
- **Joint Profile:** Flush or slightly recessed, finished with a churn brush to expose the aggregate. No weather-struck or ribbon pointing.
- **Bond:** Stretcher bond to mirror the existing structure.
- **On-Site Sample:** Photographs of a brick panel are included in the Miscellaneous Document. A sample panel will be provided for approval by the conservation office prior to construction.

5.24. Roofing & Leadwork

Roof Tiles

Item: Main roof covering for the pitched extension. **Heritage handmade clay tiles BROWN 168 x 267mm MA14052**

5.25. Leadwork

- **Item:** Valleys, flashings, and secret gutters.
- **Specification:** Code 5 and Code 6 milled lead sheet.
Standard: Installed strictly in accordance with the Lead Sheet Training Academy (LSTA) guidelines.

5.26. Rainwater Goods

Gutters and Downpipes

- **Item:** Rainwater system.
- **Material:** Cast iron (strictly no plastic or aluminium alternatives).
- **Profile:** Half-round gutters with circular downpipes and traditional decorative hopper heads.
Finish: Factory-primed and painted gloss black (RAL 9005).

5.27. The Lean-To Interface (The Visual "Link")

- **Item:** Flashing and structural junction where the new extension meets the modern lean-to.
- **Material:** Code 5 milled lead sheet detailing.
- **Execution:** Designed as a distinct, recessed dark visual break. This ensures the eye can easily "read" the three distinct eras of the property: 16th century, modern lean-to, and 2026 extension.

5.28. Glazing & Openings

Windows and Large Doors

- **Item:** Minimalist sliding doors and window frames.
- **Material:** Slim-profile powder-coated aluminium or steel.
- **Colour:** Matt Anthracite Grey (RAL 7016) or Black (RAL 9005).
- **Justification:** By using modern, slim profiles on the extension, we avoid clashing with the chunky timber-mullioned or leaded windows of the 16th-century building.

5.29. Rainwater Goods

Gutters and Downpipes

- **Item:** Rainwater system for the new extension.
- **Material:** Powder-coated aluminium with a textured finish (to simulate cast iron but with a modern profile).
- **Colour:** Matt Black (RAL 9005).

6. THE ACCESS COMPONENT

6.1 Inclusivity and Internal Transitions

Level thresholds are maintained through the ground floor of the glass link, connecting the existing layout smoothly to the new extension rooms. Internal transitions are optimized to ensure ease of movement, accommodating varying levels of mobility without compromising historic step arrangements inside the main cottage core.

6.2 Inclusivity and External Transitions

Due to the location of the present garage and the approved double garage and log store, several issues were highlighted concerning access and safety. Indeed, the double garage appears to have been 'squeezed' within the cottage's curtilage to a location that meant it would sit within the Reading Borough Council boundary on the north east side. Firstly, this would have meant driving over land not within the cottage's curtilage in order to access the double garage. Secondly, because of the differing ground levels the suggested turning/parking area directly between the double garage and cottage would need to be built up to accommodate access to and from the double garage. This would also mean cars (either stationary or moving) would not only be very close to the cottage but also the external oil boiler and oil tank.

To overcome these issues, the cottage owners have purchased an additional parcel of land on the north east side of the site to accommodate vehicular access to the existing garage (if required) and also the creation of a dedicated parking area for vehicles. Such vehicles are therefore parked at least 10 metres from the cottage in a position that also allows the opportunity to create gradual access to the property from the parking area without the requirement of a retaining wall or other means that would have been necessary to build up the ground.



Fig. 9 Diagram illustrating the cottage's curtilage in relation to existing garage access.

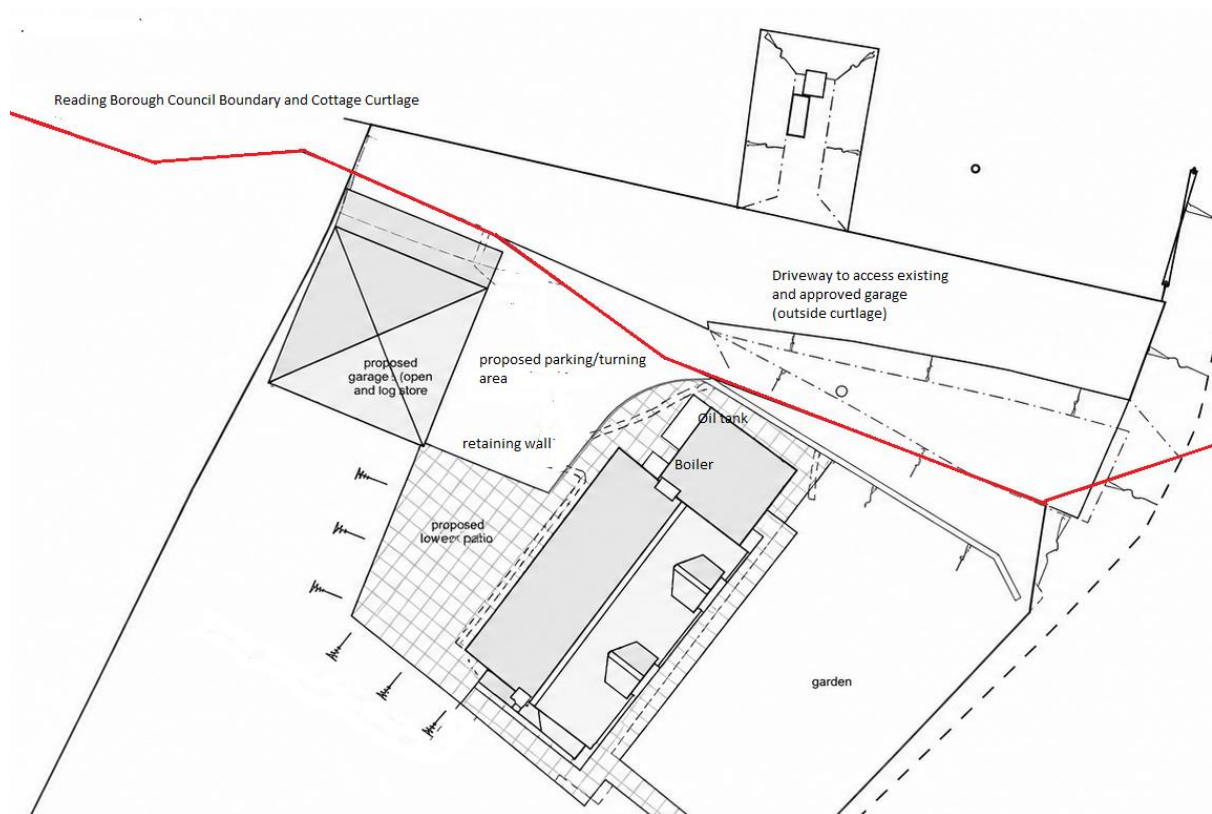


Fig. 10 Diagram illustrating access, parking and turning issues with approved double garage



Fig. 11 Diagram illustrating new parking area

6.3 External Connections and Emergency Services

The extension does not alter existing access pathways, principal entry doors, or parking provisions. Paths around the side of the property remain open and unobstructed, ensuring emergency services and service personnel maintain rapid, direct access to the rear garden and all exit points. The extension adds a further escape route from the listed building in case of emergency.

7. HERITAGE IMPACT & JUSTIFICATION

7.1 Introduction

Heritage Impact and justification for the proposals are set out in detail at Sections 5 and 6 of the Heritage Statement (BBHC 2026). In summary, the Heritage Statement identifies that there would be no direct adverse effects to the fabric of the principal listed building in which most of its special architectural and historic interests are vested. Indeed, the proposed development provides the opportunity for a number of valuable enhancements to the historic fabric which will contribute to its long-term conservation, including the removal of existing services associated with the current kitchen - which will be relocated to the new extension - and the introduction of a low carbon heating system (see appendix 2). The only potential heritage effects are therefore to the contribution setting makes to the significance of the building.

The Heritage Statement (Section 3, BBHC 2026) identifies that the proposed extension is located within the approximate area of a range of historic agricultural outbuildings shown within the curtilage of the listed cottage on mid- to late-18th-century and mid-19th-century maps, and partly within the footprint of the existing garage and its associated lean-to structures. The key view of the principal southeastern elevation of the building from Blagrove Lane which best conveys its heritage significance will not be affected by the proposals, which also offer potential for enhancement of oblique views from the same lane, in which the existing garage building(s) detracts from the cottage's setting, by replacing it with a higher quality building which better frames these views.

The increased scale and massing of the proposed new building will, however, result in some adverse visual effects due to partial loss of the existing green backdrop to the cottage which can be seen beyond the visual clutter of the extant garage building in the oblique views from Blagrove Lane. However, the backdrops to these views appear very likely to have featured the historic agricultural outbuildings shown on the 18th-century and mid-19th-century maps referred to above (further detail can be found in Section 3 of the Heritage Statement), and therefore there is a historic precedent for built form featuring in these views. Furthermore, construction of the approved garage and log store was identified as having similar adverse visual effects in the settings and impact assessment, with a significant adverse effect in the key view of the principal southeast elevation which the current proposals would remove.

The Heritage Statement concludes that the positive and negative effects assessed with regard to the contribution setting makes to the heritage significance of 3, Blagrove Lane broadly balance each other, resulting in a neutral effect upon its significance and thereby conserving the listed building's significance as required by statute and national and local planning policy. Nevertheless, where there is a degree of harm to setting, it is assessed that this harm will be outweighed by the substantial weight to be attached to the public (including heritage) benefits of the proposals, which it is considered will lead to better long-term conservation of the listed building. The identified public (mostly heritage) benefits of the proposals include:

- Introduction of an Air Source Heat Pump, enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed (to which measures substantial weight is to be afforded under the NPPF (2026));

- Moving the kitchen/dining room from within the principal listed building to the new extension, thereby reducing or removing associated risks (such as damage through condensation, fire or flood) to the heritage asset;
- Securing the optimum viable use of the heritage asset in support of its long-term conservation by reducing the future burden of services upon, and the role of, the principal listing building which will revert to a living area and bedrooms only;
- By doing all of the above, sustaining and enhancing the significance of the heritage asset, including its setting (the replacement of existing garage structures with a higher quality building offsetting the negative effects of additional built form and loss of green backdrop to the listed building in certain views).

The proposed development is therefore considered to be clearly justified in heritage terms (see Section 6 of BBHC 2026) in accordance with statutory requirements, Chapter 20 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026) and Reading Borough Council local plan policy.

7.2 The Principle of Reversibility

In accordance with Historic England guidelines, the structural link has been detailed to ensure it is completely reversible. Should future conservation strategies dictate its removal, the glass link and extension can be dismantled without causing any degradation, structural impairment, or permanent scarring to the primary Grade II listed building fabric.

7.3 Conclusion

The proposal balances contemporary residential requirements with the securing of the long-term conservation and enhancement of the listed building. By employing a lower hipped roofline, high-quality hand-made clay tiles, natural horizontal timber cladding, and an innovative glass link, the scheme successfully meets the criteria of Reading Borough Council Policies EN1, EN6, CC1 and CC7 and offers a valuable package of public and heritage benefits which the approved garage/log store lacks. We respectfully request that planning permission and listed building consent be granted.

8. SCHEDULE OF WORKS

Property: 3 Gravel Hill, Blagrove Lane Caversham RG4 7DY

Listing Grade: Grade II

Proposal: Erection of a single-storey modern glazed/aluminium link extension to the side & rear modern lean-to extension, minor internal alterations to the existing lean-to extension, and associated making good, linking to a modern 1.5 storey rear extension.

Part 1: Pre-Commencement & Protection Measures

- **Item 1.1 Contractor Heritage Briefing:** All site operatives must receive written and verbal briefings detailing the significance of the historic fabric, the boundaries of the pre-listing building elements, and the absolute prohibition of cutting into original materials.
- **Item 1.2 Physical Protective Barriers:** Erect independent, padded timber hoarding over vulnerable external areas of the cottage adjacent to the construction zone to shield original masonry from accidental impact during groundworks.
- **Item 1.3 Targeted Soft-Strip:** Remove late 20th-century internal fixtures, non-structural modern plasterboards, and modern floor coverings within the existing rear lean-to zone. Modern elements of no heritage significance must be carefully dismantled to clear the junction workspace.
- **Item 1.4 Intrusive Fabric Verification:** Conduct low-key, localized non-destructive exposure works behind modern linings to verify the exact structural condition of the historic cottage rear wall hidden inside the 20th-century extension.

Officer Notification: Notify Reading Borough Council's conservation officer if any previously undocumented or hidden historic timber-framing or brickwork is exposed during the soft-strip phase, allowing for inspection prior to main structural intervention.

Part 2: External Works (The New Modern Extension)

- **Item 2.1 (Substructure):** Excavation of shallow reinforced concrete raft foundation designed to minimise root damage and avoid historic structural footings.
- **Item 2.2 (Brick Plinth):** Construct the external skin of the extension plinth using matching facing bricks. Lay bricks in a matching bond and lime mortar mix to match the historic building's colour, texture, and joint profile.
- **Item 2.3 (Cavity Wall Substructure):** Construct the inner skin using lightweight blockwork, incorporating a fully insulated cavity and damp-proof course (DPC) tied securely into the new plinth.
- External skin also in blockwork with timber battens & a boarded finish.
- **Item 2.4 (Junction/Link):** Installation of a fully glazed structural glass connection channel linking the new modern box directly to the lean-to rear wall, ensuring minimal physical impact and reversible attachment points using non-corrosive stainless steel fixings into the modern lean-to mortar joints.

Part 3: Internal Alterations & Making Good

- **Item 3.1:** Formation of a new single structural door/opening through the existing rear external ground-floor wall (formerly a window opening). Brickwork removed with hand tools to create the new access opening. Insertion of concealed structural steel lintel as detailed by structural engineer.
- **Item 3.2:** Making good the interior masonry reveals where the new doorway connects to the old entrance lobby & bathroom. Re-pointing around the new opening using lime

mortar mix (match existing in colour, aggregate size, and lime-to-sand ratio; no hard cement).

- **Item 3.3:** Reinstatement of original skirting boards carefully cut back and hand-finished adjacent to the new structural threshold.

Part 4: Superstructure, Frames & Glass Link

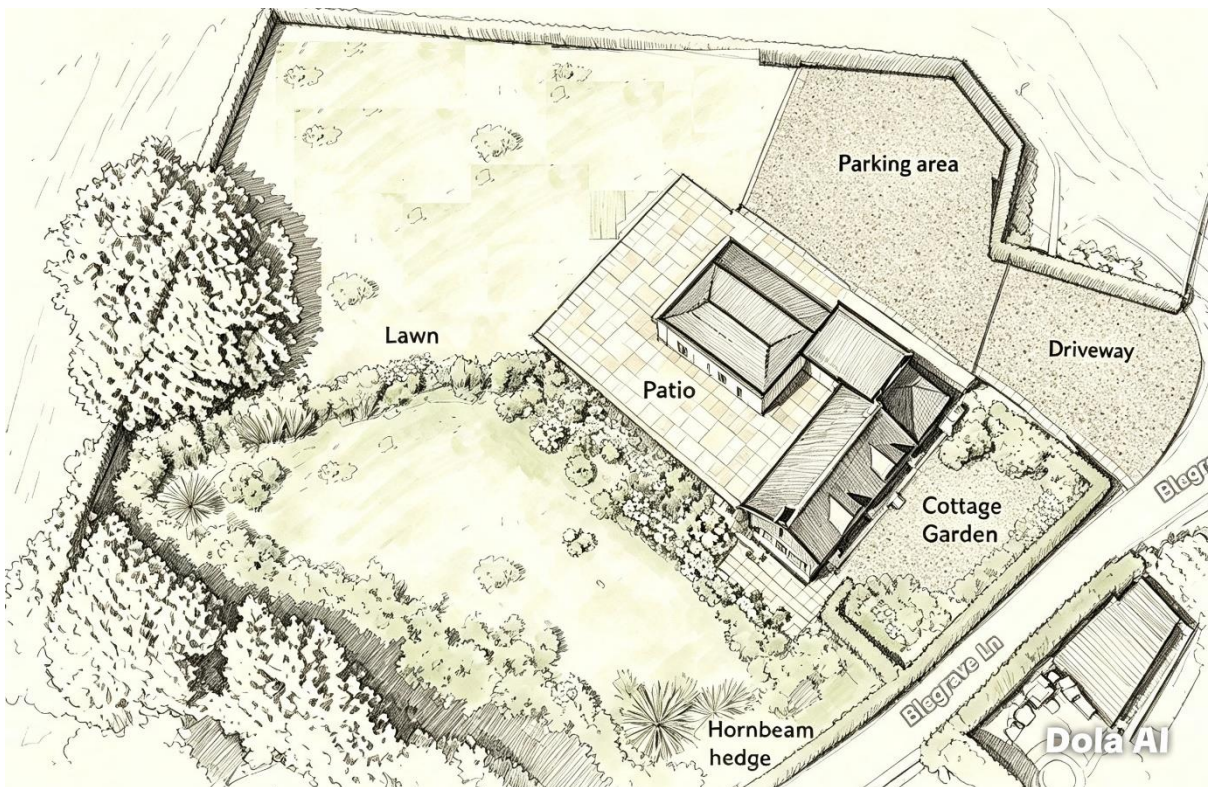
- **Item 4.1 (Glazed Elements):** Install the high-performance powder-coated aluminium **frames** and double/triple glazed units to all extension windows & doors..
- **Item 4.2 (The Glass Link):** Install the structural glass link connection channel between the new extension and the lean -to element of listed building. Fix the link mechanically using stainless steel fixings into the historic mortar joints only, avoiding drilling directly into the historic bricks. Ensure the connection is entirely reversible and finished with a high-movement silicone sealant.

Part 5: Roofing

- **Item 5.1 (Roofing)** The 1.5 storey rear extension Warm roof to be in standard timber construction with additional insulation to give superior level of insulation with a U value of 0.14. Plasterboard & skim finish to the vaulted ceiling. See Section A-A in the miscellaneous document.

Appendix 1: CGI images of proposed extension and landscape sketch





APPENDIX 2: Existing plumbing within the historic building.



Fig 1a. External sink and washing machine outlet gulley (historic south east wall)



**Fig 2a Internal pipework in kitchen
(historic north east wall, kitchen side).**



**Fig 3a Internal pipework (historic north east
wall, lobby side)**



Fig 4a Internal pipework (historic north east wall, lobby side).



Fig 5a Internal pipework (historic north east wall, lobby side)



Fig 6a Internal pipework (historic north east wall, bathroom side).



Fig 7a Internal pipework (historic north east wall, bathroom side)



Fig. 8a. Mains inlet pipe (circled red), sink trap and waste, hot and cold water supply. These were exposed when the sand and cement internal render was removed. Signs of historic leakage and damp can be seen at the base of the pipe.

Appendix 3: Table of significant factors comparing the existing listed cottage with the approved garage and proposed extension.

	Existing	Approved Garage	Proposed Extension
Access and safety			
Distance from Historic Building to combustible material	Internal boiler 500mm External oil tank 500mm	External boiler 200mm External oil tank 1000mm	0
Distance from vehicles to the historic building	4000mm	800mm	4000mm
Alterations to ground level resulting in steps/drops of more than 200mm.	0 alterations	1 drop of 1000mm	0 alterations
Number of escape routes from within the listed building.	1	1	2
Conserving the asset			
Number of Plumbing inlets and outlets passing through the historic fabric of the listed building	9	7	2 (existing holes will be used)
Number of plumbing pipes fixed to the historic fabric of the listed building	12	12	2
Number and type of white goods present within the listed building	6 Fridge, freezer, oven, hob, dishwasher, tumble dryer	6 Fridge, freezer, oven, hob, dishwasher, tumble dryer	0
Number and type of open water outlets within listed building	1 Kitchen sink	1 Kitchen sink	0
Low impact living within the listed building	No	No	Yes
Is the main front view of the listed building affected in any way	No	Yes	No
Enhancing the asset			
Energy efficiency levels	Low (oil fired heating)	Low (oil fired heating)	High (ASHP)
Removal of unsightly outbuildings and existing garage	No	Yes	Yes

Appendix 4: Examples of similarly extended listed buildings within the region.





Appendix 5: The ridge line.

1. Local Council Design Guides (The "1-Metre" Rule)

Many UK local authorities explicitly write the 1-metre ridge drop into their Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). This acts as a clear objective target for architects.

- **Chorley Council's Householder Design Guidance:** Section 2.12 explicitly states: *"An extension should generally be subservient in design to the parent property. To achieve this, elevations should ideally be set back from the existing elevation and the **ridge height made lower than the main ridge by a minimum of 1 metre.**"*
- **Other Councils:** While some authorities like Slough Borough Council accept an absolute minimum of 0.5 metres, aiming for a full **1-metre drop** positions the extension well above the bare minimum requirement, dramatically reducing the risk of a "dominant" or "clunky" appearance.

2. Historic England & Heritage Frameworks

National bodies do not usually mandate rigid metric figures because historic buildings vary so much, but they strongly validate the *principle* behind a 1-metre drop:

- **Historic England Guidelines:** They emphasize that extensions must not "swamp" or dominate traditional cottages. Dropping the roofline by 1 metre ensures the original chimney stacks or historic tile lines remain the dominant silhouette when viewed from the street.
- **Basingstoke and Deane Heritage SPD:** Specifically highlights that for listed buildings, *"ridge heights should generally be lower and roof spans smaller"* to protect the hierarchy of the built form.

3. Planning Inspectorate Case Law (Precedents)

When planning applications are refused by local councils, they go to the national Planning Inspectorate. Appeal decisions show that judges lean heavily on relative ridge heights to determine if an extension is acceptable:

- In Appeal Decision 3360944, an inspector allowed a large barn-style extension because it featured a **lower eave and ridge height**, ensuring it did not dominate the original layout.

APPENDIX 6. Case study of neighbouring property.

P25/S2703/LB

3 Gravel Hill Cottages was purchased from Mapledurham Estate by the applicants in March 2025 and renovated during the same year (PL/22/0643 and PL/22/0644). During this time, Mapledurham Estate also sold another grade II listed building (Thatched Cottage, Chazey Heath), which was also in a derelict condition.

Although the two properties are approximately only one mile apart, they are in differing councils: Thatched Cottage resides in South Oxfordshire, whereas 3 Gravel Hill spans the two councils of Reading Borough and South Oxfordshire.

Thatched Cottage has recently been granted planning permission and listed building consent for a significant development. The comparative planning statement (see exert below) demonstrates that a nearby precedent at Thatched Cottage was granted consent for substantial intervention under the accepted principle of securing a heritage asset's viable future. By comparison, the proposal for 3 Gravel Hill Cottages presents a significantly lower degree of intervention and harm while achieving the same conservation-led public benefit.

Comparative Planning and Heritage Argument

1. The Principle of Administrative Consistency and Precedent

While it is acknowledged that each planning application must be decided on its own merits, local planning authorities are required to demonstrate consistency in their decision-making frameworks. This is particularly vital for the Mapledurham Estate heritage assets, which share similar historical context, structural typologies, and periods of prolonged dereliction.

In approving the redevelopment at Thatched Cottage, Chazey Heath, South Oxfordshire District Council established a clear framework for balancing "less than substantial harm" against the public benefit of bringing a derelict Grade II listed asset back into its optimum viable use. The applicants at 3 Gravel Hill seek only the equitable application of this established planning balance.

2. Proportionality of Physical Impact and "Scale of Harm"

A direct comparative analysis reveals that the proposed works at 3 Gravel Hill represent a significantly lower degree of intervention and impact than the scheme formally approved at Thatched Cottage:

- **Footprint and Dominance:** In the case of Thatched Cottage, the Council granted permission for an entirely *additional dwelling* described by the Conservation Officer as having a **"large footprint relative to the listed building"** where **"the disparity in size would be apparent, diminishing the architectural prominence of the listed building."** Conversely, the extension proposed at 3 Gravel Hill maintains a strictly subordinate relationship to the host dwelling, preserving its primary architectural prominence.
- **Functional Importance:** The Conservation Officer noted that at Thatched Cottage, **"the cottage would no longer be used as the primary building on the plot, and this would serve to diminish its functional importance."** The proposal at 3 Gravel Hill introduces no such division. The original cottage remains the absolute functional and spatial anchor of the site, maintaining its singular residential identity without fracturing its historical purpose.
- **Setting and Open Character:** The approved Thatched Cottage scheme explicitly compromised the setting by introducing a new structure closer to the roadside, **"diminishing**

the sense of isolation that it currently enjoys" and altering the **"unspoilt character of the plot"** via extensive hardstanding. The extension at 3 Gravel Hill is carefully contained within the existing residential layout, avoiding public-facing encroachment and leaving the broader, unspoilt landscape setting intact.

3. Direct Alignment with Approved Mitigation Strategies

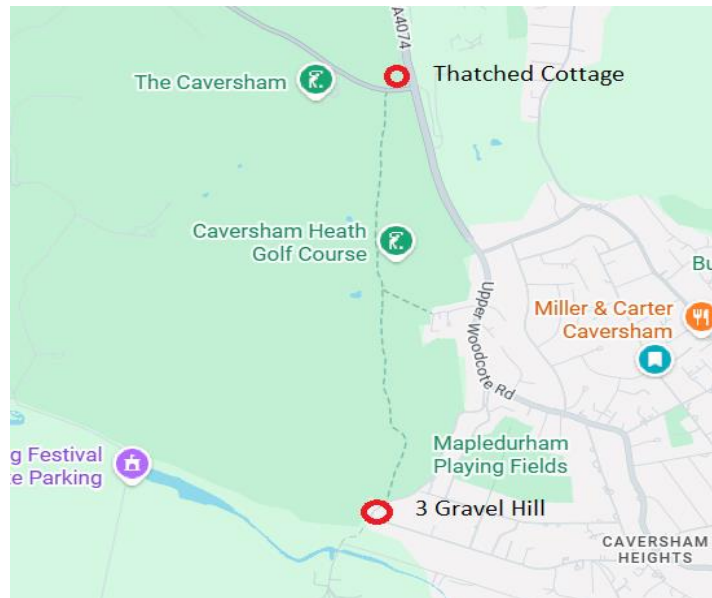
The Conservation Officer's justification for approving the high-impact scheme at Thatched Cottage rests on specific design principles. The proposed extension at 3 Gravel Hill actively utilizes these exact mitigation strategies, but with a far more modest baseline:

- **Subservience in Massing and Height:** Just as the Thatched Cottage scheme brought **"the ridge height and eaves lower than that of the cottage to give a sense of subservience,"** the extension at 3 Gravel Hill has an even lower ridge and eave height and utilizes stepped-down rooflines and broken-up massing to ensure it reads as a secondary addition.
- **Materiality and Viewpoints:** In line with the approved precedent, traditional local materials are utilized where the extension is visible in conjunction with the historic fabric, ensuring a harmonious visual relationship from all public viewpoints.
- **Preventing Long-Term Disuse:** Crucially, the Conservation Officer justified the close proximity of the new building at Thatched Cottage by stating it was **"important that the listed building functions usefully day to day... to ensure that it does not fall into disuse."** This is the core justification for the extension at 3 Gravel Hill. For a historic asset to survive in the 21st century, it must provide a viable, functional standard of living. An extension is the most direct, sustainable, and low-impact way to integrate modern living requirements entirely within the existing residential ecosystem, avoiding the extreme measure of building a secondary, dominant dwelling.

Conclusion

If a completely separate, dominant dwelling that alters the setting, plot character, and functional hierarchy of a Grade II listed building is deemed acceptable to secure its future, then a highly sensitive, physically attached, and subservient extension at 3 Gravel Hill must be acceptable by the same measure.

The proposed scheme delivers identical public and heritage benefits—the rescue and long-term conservation of a derelict Mapledurham Estate asset—whilst causing a drastically lower degree of impact to both the historic fabric and the surrounding landscape setting.



Google maps image

- 6.8 A number of different site arrangements and designs have been considered during the pre-application discussions. The proposal that has been submitted here presents a viable scheme that would cause a less than substantial level of harm to the significance of the listed building by means of alteration to its setting. The proposed dwelling has a large footprint relative to the listed building and the disparity in size would be apparent, diminishing the architectural prominence of the listed building and the sense of isolation that it currently enjoys. The cottage would no longer be used as the primary building on the plot, and this would serve to diminish its functional importance. The new dwelling would also be sited closer to the roadside than the cottage and is likely to be more visible than the listed building in public views. Alongside this are the other alterations to the plot including the laying of hardstanding all of which would change the unspoilt character of the plot.
- 6.9 However, the council's heritage officer is satisfied that the harm caused by the proposed three-bed dwelling would be mitigated or justified as well as it can be in the following ways: the new building has a lower ridge height than the cottage to give a sense of subservience. The eaves to some elements have been brought down lower than that of the cottage. The massing of the new building has been broken up into smaller elements so that in views where the two structures can be seen in conjunction with each other, the dwelling has the appearance of being subservient. The new dwelling where it can be seen in conjunction with the cottage, is of low-key traditional appearance and in materials that are typical of the locality with the more contemporary glazed elements located on elevations facing away from the listed building. The entrance to the site would be relocated immediately in front of the cottage so that it is the first element that is appreciated; this is a really important element of the scheme. Whilst the two buildings are in close proximity and could have been set at a greater distance, it is important that the listed building functions usefully day to day and proximity and layout are important aspects to ensure that it does not fall into disuse. The landscaping scheme proposes additional planting in addition to the hedge boundary around the new dwelling which will assist in softening the visual impact from the road.

Exert from Heritage Officer's comments for listed building consent