

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

PROJECT NAME: **7 THE GARDENERS - BARN**

PROJECT REF: **24.513**

DATE OF ISSUE: **OCTOBER 2026**

DESCRIPTION:

PROPOSED REPAIR, ALTERATION AND ANCILLARY CONVERSION OF EXISTING HISTORIC BARN WITHIN THE GARDEN OF 7 THE GARDENERS, SURLEY ROW, CAVERSHAM, READING, RG4 8EZ



CONTENTS	PAGE
1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. USE	2
3. AMOUNT AND LAYOUT	2
4. DESIGN APPROACH	3
5. SCALE	3
6. APPEARANCE AND MATERIALS	3
7. STRUCTURAL REPAIRS AND CONSERVATION	4
8. ACCESS	4
9. LANDSCAPING AND EXTERNAL WORKS	5
10. HERITAGE AND CONTEXT	5
11. CONCLUSION	5

1. INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of the Full Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent applications, for the repair, alteration and ancillary conversion of the existing historic barn within the garden of 7 The Gardeners, Surley Row, Caversham, Reading.

The barn is situated within the Surley Row Conservation Area and is physically attached at its south-western corner to 46 Surley Row, a Grade II listed building (List Entry No. 1113595). The barn is understood to form part of the historic curtilage of the listed building and is therefore treated as a curtilage-listed structure.

The building is currently in poor structural condition and requires significant repairs to address deterioration and secure its long-term survival. The proposals seek to stabilise and repair the building, improve its internal usability and bring it back into viable ancillary domestic use, while retaining its historic character and established external roof profile.

This statement should be read alongside the submitted drawings, Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment, Structural Remedial Schedule and structural sketch drawings.

2. USE

The barn will remain in ancillary domestic use associated with the main dwelling at 7 The Gardeners. The proposed use will provide flexible space for activities such as a study, multi-use room and storage.

The proposal does not involve the creation of an independent dwelling or separate residential unit. No sleeping accommodation, kitchen, bathroom or sanitary facilities are proposed, and no new drainage works form part of the application.

The continued ancillary use of the building will provide a practical purpose for the repaired structure and help secure its long-term maintenance and conservation.

3. AMOUNT AND LAYOUT

The proposals involve the repair and adaptation of the existing barn rather than the construction of a new building or an extension to its footprint. No additional building footprint is proposed.

The existing internal floor level will be lowered to improve the usability of the space and provide the required internal headroom while retaining the existing external roof height. The internal layout will remain

flexible to accommodate the proposed ancillary uses, without subdivision into separate residential accommodation.

The existing masonry walls and significant historic features will be retained and repaired wherever reasonably practicable. The historic cart opening will be retained in its established position and width, with the relationship between the lowered internal floor and the opening addressed through the detailed design.

The proposed glazing and entrance alterations will be incorporated into the existing building envelope, including the existing openings and the area currently enclosed by timber boarding, as shown on the submitted drawings.

4. DESIGN APPROACH

The design has been developed with particular regard to the barn's historic interest, its physical relationship with 46 Surley Row and its contribution to the character and appearance of the Surley Row Conservation Area.

Pre-application advice received from Reading Borough Council in December 2025 considered two approaches to improving the internal usability of the barn: increasing the external roof height or lowering the internal floor level. The Council expressed a preference for retaining the existing roof form and height to avoid harm to the relationship between the barn and the adjoining listed building.

The proposals follow the preferred approach by retaining the established external roof profile and improving the internal space through lowering of the floor level and carefully considered structural alterations. This avoids the additional external massing that would result from raising the roof.

The design seeks to preserve the building's historic character through the retention and repair of existing masonry, weatherboarding, clay roof tiles and significant openings wherever reasonably practicable. New work will be limited to that necessary to stabilise the structure, improve its usability and provide appropriate natural light.

5. SCALE

The existing external dimensions, overall scale and established roof height of the barn will be retained. No extension or increase in external roof height is proposed.

The principal changes will take place internally, including the lowering of the floor and the repair or replacement of defective structural elements. These interventions are intended to improve the usability and stability of the existing building without materially increasing its external massing.

The proposed glazed entrance and alterations to existing openings will introduce limited changes to the elevations but will not increase the building's footprint or overall height.

6. APPEARANCE AND MATERIALS

The external appearance will continue to reflect the barn's traditional agricultural character and its historic relationship with the adjoining listed building.

The existing plain clay tile roof covering will be retained and reused wherever practicable. Defective roof timbers will be repaired or replaced as necessary, with historic fabric retained wherever reasonably practicable and the existing roofline maintained.

The existing masonry walls will be repaired, with deteriorated mortar carefully removed and affected areas repointed using compatible lime-based mortar. Hard cement-based mortar will be avoided on historic masonry. Existing weatherboarding will be retained and repaired where possible, with replacement boarding to match the existing profile, material and finish as closely as practicable where replacement is necessary.

The proposals include limited glazing alterations to introduce natural light. A fixed glazed light is proposed within the existing door opening on the southwest elevation, with an openable window within the smaller opening above. The existing shutter feature will be retained and repaired.

A new glazed entrance is also proposed within the area currently enclosed by timber boarding on the northwest elevation. As there is no brickwork behind this boarded section, the entrance can be formed without removing historic masonry at this location. The proposed glazed entrance will comprise doors, sidelights and an upper glazed section, following the pitch of the existing roof from eaves level. The glazing will be double-glazed aluminium-framed units, with a restrained frame profile and detailing intended to sit sensitively within the historic building. The design will allow the new work to be read as a considered contemporary intervention rather than an imitation of historic fabric.

The overall approach is to retain the barn's traditional materials and character while allowing necessary repairs and limited alterations to support its continued use.

7. STRUCTURAL REPAIRS AND CONSERVATION

The structural proposals have been informed by investigations undertaken by Simpson TWS Structural Engineers, including the Structural Inspection Report and Trial Pit Inspection Report.

The works include localised masonry repairs and stitching, repointing, underpinning where necessary, and the repair or replacement of defective roof timbers. The structural design also considers the need for new floor and foundation construction to support the building following the lowering of the internal floor level.

The current structural approach includes a reinforced concrete ground-bearing floor slab and reinforced concrete perimeter foundation or retaining walls, with existing masonry walls to be underpinned in sequence where required. Temporary support and careful sequencing will be essential to maintain stability during the works. The final details will be developed in conjunction with the structural engineer, with particular care required at the junction with 46 Surley Row.

The floor construction and its junction with the historic masonry will require appropriate moisture management to minimise the risk of transferring moisture into the existing walls and to respect the needs of traditional construction.

The works will be undertaken with the objective of retaining as much historic fabric as reasonably practicable. The existing brick paviour floor will need to be removed to achieve the proposed lower floor level. A photographic record will be made before removal, and the retention or reuse of the existing pavements will be considered wherever practicable.

The detailed design and construction methodology will need to protect the adjoining listed building and minimise unnecessary disturbance to the historic structure.

8. ACCESS

The barn is accessed from within the curtilage of 7 The Gardeners. No new vehicular access or alteration to the established site access is proposed as part of this application.

The lowering of the internal floor level is intended to improve the usability of the barn and its relationship with the entrance openings. The entrance arrangements will be designed in conjunction with the revised floor level to provide a practical means of access while respecting the historic fabric and proportions of the existing building.

The existing building is historic in character, and the scope for alterations is constrained by the need to preserve significant fabric and the relationship with the adjoining listed building. The proposals therefore seek to improve access where reasonably practicable within these constraints. The final threshold details and internal floor levels will be coordinated with the structural design and the submitted drawings.

9. LANDSCAPING AND EXTERNAL WORKS

The application does not propose an extension to the building footprint or a substantial reconfiguration of the surrounding garden. The principal works relate to the existing barn and its structure.

Any external ground disturbance required in connection with the foundation and structural works will be limited to that necessary to undertake the repairs safely. Where external ground levels need to be adjusted locally to facilitate the structural works, these will be coordinated with the engineer's recommendations and the need to protect the existing building and adjoining listed structure.

Minor landscaping works will be undertaken as necessary to accommodate access to the building, including the provision of stepped and ramped access. The overall character of the surrounding garden and the established relationship between the barn and the main dwelling will be retained. An indicative landscape layout is shown on the proposed Ground Floor Plan.

10. HERITAGE AND CONTEXT

The barn makes a contribution to the historic character of the Surley Row Conservation Area and has a longstanding physical and functional relationship with 46 Surley Row. Its traditional masonry, weatherboarding, clay tile roof and historic cart opening provide evidence of its former ancillary agricultural function.

The proposals have been developed to retain the established external roof height and overall scale, repair the building using compatible materials and limit alterations to those necessary to secure its continued use. The proposed glazing introduces a limited change to the elevations but is intended to provide natural light without materially changing the building's overall form or massing.

The Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment considers the significance of the barn, its relationship with the adjoining listed building and the effect of the proposed works on the Conservation Area in greater detail. It should be read alongside this statement when assessing the heritage implications of the application.

11. CONCLUSION

The proposals provide a considered approach to the repair and continued ancillary use of the historic barn at 7 The Gardeners. They address the building's deteriorating structural condition while seeking to retain its historic character, traditional materials, established scale and roof profile.

The works have been informed by structural investigations and Reading Borough Council's pre-application advice, particularly the preference for retaining the existing roof height. The limited entrance and glazing alterations are intended to improve natural light and usability while remaining sensitive to the building's historic context.

The proposed works will help secure the long-term future of the barn and maintain its contribution to the Surley Row Conservation Area and its relationship with the adjoining Grade II listed building.

