



The Barn at 7 The Gardeners

Statement Of Heritage Significance And Impact Assessment

Applicant

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Purpose

This Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment has been prepared in support of a Listed Building Consent application for the proposed conversion of the Barn, located in the garden of 7 The Gardeners, Surley Row, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8EZ, a curtilage listed structure within the curtilage of 46 Surley Row, Grade II listed (List Entry No. 1113595).

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1 Introduction

1.1 Executive summary

This Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment has been prepared in support of a Listed Building Consent application and associated planning application for the conversion of the Barn located in the garden of 7 The Gardeners, Surley Row, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8EZ. It has been prepared in accordance with Historic England's Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance (Historic England, 2019) and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The statement assesses the significance of the barn as a curtilage listed structure, establishes its historical context and evaluates the impact of the proposed works on its significance and on the Surley Row Conservation Area.

effect of the proposals on their significance rather than the scale of the development. HE6 states that when considering the potential effect of a development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, and that this applies irrespective of whether the effect is positive, substantial harm or less than substantial. Where harm is identified as less than substantial, paragraph 4 requires that harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing the longterm reuse of a vacant or underused Listed Building

requires that development in areas characterised by heritage assets responds to the historic townscape, is sensitive to historic context, and reflects local distinctiveness. The proposals involve the conversion and repair of the existing barn, retaining its overall external form, roofline and principal historic features. The works include necessary structural repairs and alterations to the roof structure, lowering of the internal floor level, and the introduction of new entrance doors, sidelights and associated glazing above. The heritage implications of these interventions are assessed individually in Section 7.

2 Policy, legislation and guidance

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework

This assessment has been prepared with regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (updated September 2026), which sets out the Government's approach to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The NPPF defines a heritage asset as a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of its heritage interest. This includes assets that are formally designated, such as the Grade II listing of 46 Surley Row, and undesignated assets, such as the Barn in its capacity as a curtilage listed structure. HE4 states that Heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance and any harm to or loss of significance should have a convincing justification. HE5 requires an applicant to assess the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, and the potential

2.2 Local Planning Policy

The development plan for the site is the Reading Borough Local Plan (Reading Borough Council, adopted November 2019). Policy EN1, Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment, requires that heritage assets and their settings, including Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, are protected and where possible enhanced. It states that proposals affecting Listed Buildings should not have an adverse impact on the elements that contribute to their special architectural or historic interest, and that applications affecting heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement. Policy EN3, Enhancement of Conservation Areas, requires that the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas is conserved and enhanced, and that development proposals within them make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. The policy confirms that an adopted Conservation Area Appraisal is a material consideration in determining planning applications, which applies to the Surley Row Conservation Area Appraisal referenced in this statement. Policy EN6, New Development in a Historic Context,

2.3 Historic England Guidance

This statement has been prepared in accordance with Historic England's Advice Note 12, Statements of Heritage Significance (Historic England, 2019), which sets out the expected approach to describing and assessing significance in support of applications affecting heritage assets. The assessment of significance in Section 5.1 draws on the four values framework set out in Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (Historic England, 2008), namely evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value. Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2, Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England, 2015), has also informed the structure of the impact assessment in Section 5.2, and Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3, The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2017), has informed the assessment of the barn's contribution to the setting of 46 Surley Row.

3 Setting and context

3.1 Listing information

The barn is understood to form part of the curtilage of 46 Surley Row, a Grade II listed building (List Entry No. 1113595), listed on 22 March 1957. The barn is positioned to the north-east of the main house, abutting its north-east corner.

Although the barn now lies within the ownership and property boundary of 7 The Gardeners, the Council's Conservation Officer has advised that it should be treated as part of the listed building and its curtilage. This advice reflects the barn's historic association with 46 Surley Row, its longstanding ancillary function and its physical attachment to the principal dwelling. Historic mapping indicates that the barn formed part of the historic curtilage before the later development of 7 The Gardeners. Accordingly, the barn is treated as a curtilage-listed structure, benefiting from the statutory protection afforded to curtilage structures under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, notwithstanding that it is not individually identified on the National Heritage List for England.

It is therefore important to consider the principal designated asset, 46 Surley Row, to understand the context in which the barn sits. The significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical fabric but also from its setting, and the barn and principal dwelling share a historic and functional relationship. Their relationship and the historic development of the site are considered in this statement

The listing description for 46 Surley Row reads:

"46 Surley Row was listed on 22 March 1957 under list entry number 1113595; the listing notes read: "SURLEY ROW 1. 5128 (East Side) No 46 SU 7176 5/286 22.3.57. II 2. C17 or early C18. 2 storeys, colour-washed flint with brick quoins, window surrounds and string at 1st floor level. Central 2 storey gable on north front with roof carried down to ground floor level on each side. 2 casement windows on 1st floor with round headed leaded casements.

2 similar casement windows and central door on ground floor. Flanking chimneys in old tile roof. Exposed timber in gable. Segmental headed doorway with projecting porch on slender wooden Doric columns."

The listing description focuses on the architectural character of the principal dwelling and does not specifically describe the barn or other curtilage structures. The Surley Row Conservation Area Appraisal (Reading Borough Council, 2010, p. 7) similarly describes 46 Surley Row in brief terms but does not identify or assess the barn. The contribution of the barn to the special interest of the Conservation Area and its heritage significance is therefore considered in detail within this statement, drawing on historic mapping, archive research and physical survey.



Fig. 1. 7 The Gardeners Barn to the north-east of the Grade II listed 46 Surley Row. Source: Historic England, not to scale.

- Key:**
- ◀ Grade II listed 46 Surley Row
 - ◻ 7 The Gardeners Barn

3.2 Notes on Surley Row Conservation Area

The Surley Row Conservation Area Appraisal (Reading Borough Council, 2010) identifies the key features that define the special interest of the Conservation Area. Those of particular relevance to this assessment are the focus on a narrow lane lacking footpaths and bounded by high brick walls and other traditional materials, the varied and interesting buildings and building line, the little altered historic street pattern now protected by traffic management measures, and the generally domestic use, scale and character of the area (Reading Borough Council, 2010, p.4).

The Appraisal further notes the historic significance of the route itself, recording that the 1889 OS Map clearly marks the area as one of the oldest in Caversham, and that the lane formed part of a direct route from the village of Emmer Green to the parish church in Caversham village, traditionally used by pall bearers travelling between the two settlements (Reading Borough Council, 2010, p.4). The Appraisal notes that it was not unusual for travellers on this route to stop at the Gardeners Arms in Surley Row, and confirms that the current (now demolished) public house was of more recent date than the historic Inn building on the site.

This directly establishes the historic association between the lane, the licensed use of 46 Surley Row and the barn as an ancillary structure, a relationship that is further evidenced by the historic mapping examined in Section 4 of this statement

4 Historical development and mapping evidence

4.1 The History of Caversham and Surley Row

Caversham is first recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086, where it appears as Caueresham, within the Hundred of Binfield held by Walter Giffard after the Norman Conquest. The survey records a substantial settlement of 43 households, with 21 ploughlands and a mill, indicating a well-established agricultural community (Morris, 1978). Caversham remained a distinct parish within Oxfordshire until 1911, when it was transferred to Berkshire and incorporated into the Borough of Reading. (Reading Borough Council, 2010, p.11).

Surley Row is one of the oldest routes in Caversham. Early county and survey maps of the late 18th and early 19th century show the general road network around Caversham but at a scale too small to identify individual lanes with confidence. Thomas Pride's topographical map of Reading and its surroundings, (Fig. 2), published in 1790 (Pride, T., 1790, Royal Berkshire Archives), and Robert Dawson's Ordnance Survey drawing of the Reading area, (Fig. 3), prepared circa 1809 (Dawson, R., c.1809, British Library, Maps OSD 126), both show Caversham village and the surrounding countryside, confirming that Surley Row sat within a well-established rural settlement on the northern edge of Reading surrounded by open countryside at this period. Neither map distinguishes Surley Row as a named route at this scale.



Fig. 2, 1790 Thomas Pride Map of Reading



Fig. 3, 1809 Robert Dawson Ordnance Survey

4.2 Parish of Caversham Tithe Map of 1844

The lane is first clearly identifiable on the parish of Caversham Tithe Map of 1844 (The National Archives, IR 30/27/28, not reproduced here due to licensing restrictions), which shows it as an established route with several properties fronting onto it, including 46 Surley Row and its curtilage structures. The Conservation Area Appraisal confirms that the lane served as a direct route from the village of Emmer Green to the parish church in Caversham village to the south, a route traditionally used by pall bearers travelling between the two settlements (Reading Borough Council, 2010, p.4). The historic character of the lane is further described in a 1988 article published in the Caversham Bridge Magazine by the Caversham and District Residents Association, which records the presence of the timber-framed Tudor Cottage and the mid-19th century Tudor Gothic Grove Cottage on the west side of the lane, and notes No. 46 on the east side as a building in colour washed flint immediately beyond which stood the Gardeners Arms public house at the point where the Conservation Area boundary ends (CADRA, 1988).



Fig. 4, 1895 Ordnance Survey Map.

4.3 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map, c.1895

The first edition 25-inch OS map provides the clearest early cartographic evidence of the barn and its relationship to 46 Surley Row. At this date, No. 46 is annotated as a Beer House (B.H.), confirming its continued use as a licensed premises. The barn is shown as a small structure immediately to the north-east of the main house within its curtilage. The wider setting is essentially rural, with open fields and orchards surrounding the lane, and Surley Row retaining its character as an isolated rural lane with scattered historic buildings entirely surrounded by open countryside.

4.4 Ordnance Survey Map, c.1938

By the mid-20th century the Gardeners Arms is annotated as a Public House (P.H.), confirming that the licensed use had transferred from No. 46 to the newly built mock-Tudor pub on the adjacent plot. The surrounding area remains largely open at this date, though the beginnings of suburban development are visible to the north and east.

4.5 Ordnance Survey Map, c.1960 OS

The later OS map shows the most significant change to the wider setting. Extensive suburban housing development has taken place to the north and east, including Stuart Close and surrounding residential streets, and the Grove Secondary School now occupies the grounds of the former Caversham Grove to the north-west. The Gardeners Arms building is clearly shown with the barn visible as a small structure within its curtilage. At this date, 46 Surley Row and Grove Cottage remain as isolated historic buildings along the lane, now entirely surrounded by modern suburban development, a contrast which the Conservation Area Appraisal would later describe as a key feature of the area's special interest (Reading Borough Council, 2010, p.3).



Fig. 5, 1938 Ordnance Survey Map.



Fig. 6, 1960 Ordnance Survey Map.

5 Description as existing

5.1 Views from public realm

When standing directly opposite 46 Surley Row, the Barn is partially visible to its rear, left of the listed building, see Fig. 7, right, above. Behind the foliage, a gable with horizontal weatherboarding can be glimpsed. To the left of the historic properties, the modern residential development has a pronounced presence within the setting of the Conservation Area and the view from the public realm.

When viewed from the garden of 46 Surley Row, Fig. 8, right, below, the strong visual and physical relationship between the listed building and the Barn is clearly legible. The barn's handmade clay tiled roof sits in direct continuity with the roofscape of the listed building to the left, sharing the same materiality and rural character. The timber-clad gable of the barn is visible at the centre of the view, with a further lean-to structure to its right in a state of disrepair. Beyond the barn, the modern residential development to the rear presents a contrasting backdrop, with its prominent orange-red tiled roofs and contemporary dormer windows sitting visibly above the historic roofline. The garden setting, with its mature planting and informal character, reinforces the domestic and historic quality of the curtilage and the wider Conservation Area.



Fig. 7, View from Surley Row, The Gardeners' gable behind the foliage, to left of the main building.



Fig. 8, View from Surley Row garden.

5.2 Exterior

The northern elevation of the Barn is the principal façade, fully visible from the garden of 7 The Gardeners. Two large openings dominate the elevation: one infilled with horizontal timber weatherboarding and one providing the main access door. Their scale and proportion suggest a functional, agricultural character consistent with the building's origins as an outbuilding to the former Gardeners Arms Inn at 46 Surley Row. The fact that the barn is accessed from this northern elevation, facing away from Surley Row, reinforces its subservient relationship to the former pub. It would have served as a working outbuilding, likely a cart shed or stable, rather than as an extension to the inn's public-facing functions.

The southwest gable, which adjoins the boundary with 46 Surley Row, features the original timber frame expressed at its apex, with horizontal featheredge weatherboarding infilling the spandrel above the masonry. This detail is characteristic of 18th and 19th century agricultural outbuildings in the region and contributes significantly to the rural character of the Surley Row Conservation Area. The roof is constructed of handmade plain clay tiles, weathered to a varied grey-brown patina consistent with their age. Visible sagging of the roof plane, particularly over the larger western bay, reflects the structural deterioration noted in the structural engineer's report, attributable to the deflection of the undersized timber purlins and ridge beam. The masonry walls are laid primarily in English Bond brickwork, with alternating courses of headers and stretchers characteristic of 18th to 19th century construction. The brickwork shows multiple signs of deterioration including spalling brick faces, eroded mortar joints, and areas of unsympathetic repair carried out in hard cement mortar, which is incompatible with the original lime mortar construction.



Fig. 9, Northwest and Southwest elevations.

5.3 Abutment with 46 Surley Row

The southwest gable of the Barn directly adjoins 46 Surley Row, with no gap between the two structures. The handmade clay tiled roof of the barn sits immediately alongside the colour-washed rendered walls and plain clay tile roof of 46 Surley Row, the two sharing the same material palette and rural character. The garden elevation of 46 Surley Row features multi-pane casement windows with black-painted timber frames and a substantial chimney stack rising above. Based on visual inspection, the barn's southwest wall abuts the flank wall of 46 Surley Row directly, its masonry appearing to have been built up against the existing wall of the listed building rather than bonded into it as a single structure. This is typical of ancillary outbuildings added incrementally to an existing inn, sharing a common roofline junction rather than a tied masonry bond. No intrusive opening-up has been undertaken to confirm this, and the exact nature of the junction below ground has not been verified.

This relationship is corroborated by the cartographic record in Section 4: the 1844 Tithe Map (not reproduced), the c.1895 OS map (Fig. 4), and the c.1938 and c.1960 OS maps (Fig. 5 and Fig. 6) each show the barn in the same position adjoining 46 Surley Row, confirming the physical connection has remained unbroken since before July 1948.

In line with Historic England's advice that structures pre-dating July 1948 within a listed building's curtilage are treated as part of that building, the barn's curtilage listed status is confirmed on this basis.



Fig. 10, Southwest gable of the Gardeners and Surley Row to the right.

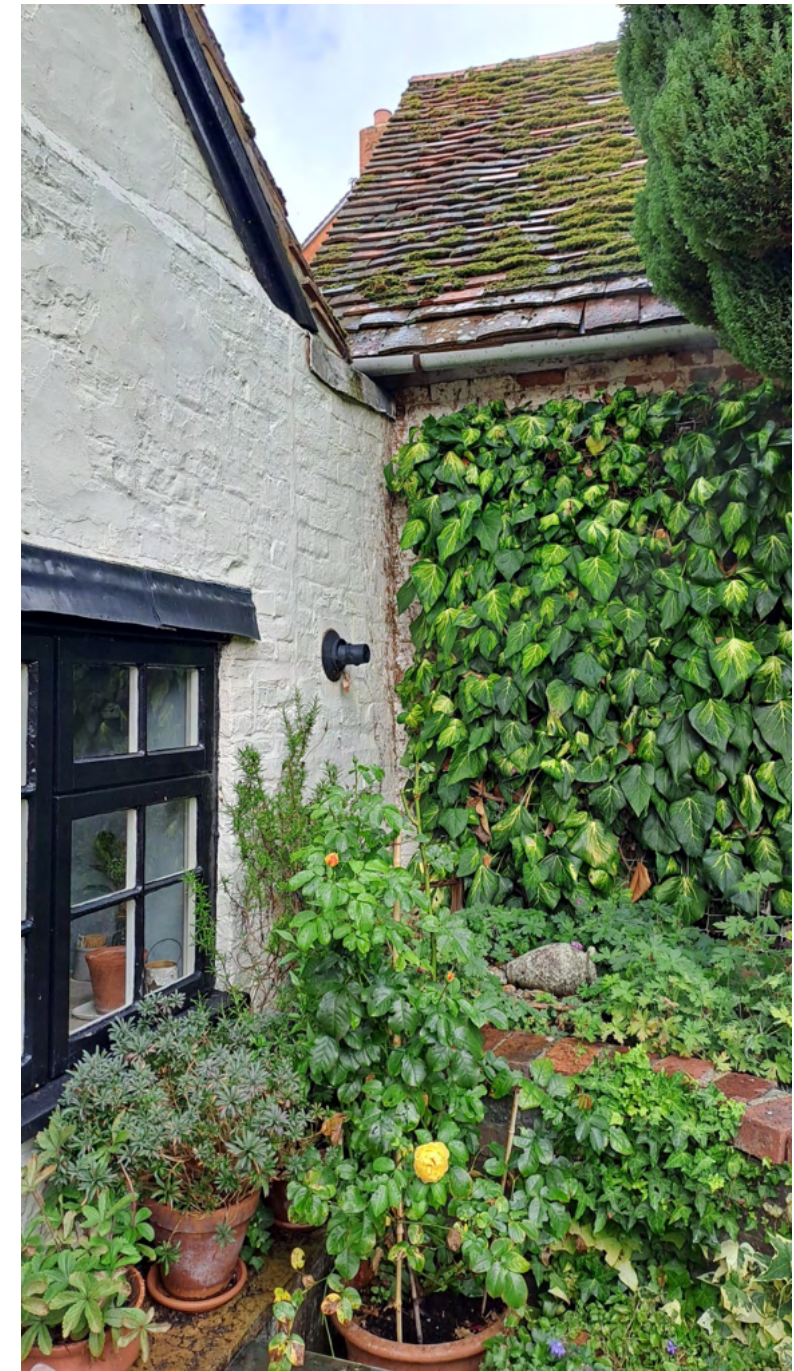


Fig. 11, 46 Surley Row to the right, the Gardeners east elevation.

5.4 Interior

The interior of the barn retains its original cut timber roof structure, comprising 95x47 rafters spanning from an eaves wall plate to a central ridge beam, with intermediate purlins measuring 140mm deep by 75mm wide (Simpson TWS, 2025). Purlins span between external and dividing walls in the eastern room, and onto intermediate struts at third points in the western room, which are in turn supported on 175mm deep by 75mm wide joists at eaves level. The use of a cut and pitched roof, rather than a factory-produced trussed system, is consistent with pre-industrial agricultural construction. On visual inspection, the rafters appear machine-sawn, which may indicate a later replacement of these members, while the principal timbers, including the ridge beam, purlins and struts, appear more consistent with earlier, hand-worked construction. However, the structural inspection did not seek to establish the age or phasing of individual members, and this observation should therefore be treated as provisional pending further investigation.

The roof structure is currently deflecting noticeably, particularly over the western room, where the ridge line has visibly dropped and ceiling joists below the intermediate struts are bowing, as seen on Fig. 13. This is attributed in part to undersized timber lintels over openings in the front elevation, which are unable to adequately support the loads and spans involved, resulting in excessive settlement contributing to the sagging of the roof.

The masonry walls internally display significant variation in construction, with areas of brick and rubble masonry visible in alternating courses of headers and stretchers, indicative of English Bond. This bonding method was predominant in England prior to the mid-19th century, further supporting the building's early origins. Extensive damp, salt crystallisation and spalling are evident throughout, particularly at low level, a consequence of the absence of any damp proof course in the original construction. The existing brick sett floor is uneven, sloping from front to rear, and contributes to the functional, utilitarian character of the space, reflecting the building's agricultural origins as a working outbuilding.



Fig. 12, Existing roof structure.



Fig. 13, Existing roof structure, significantly reduced support for part of the roof, structure sagging.



Fig. 14, Brick paviour floor and internal walls.

6 Heritage assessment

6.1 Designation and Policy Context

Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (Historic England, 2008) sets out a framework for understanding the significance of heritage assets through four principal values: evidential value, the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity; historical value, the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place; aesthetic value, the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place; and communal value, the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it (Historic England, 2015a). These values are not mutually exclusive and may overlap. The assessment below applies this framework to the Barn.

6.2 Condition and Integrity

The barn has a documented presence of at least 180 years, first appearing on the Parish of Caversham Tithe Map of 1844 as an uninhabited structure within the curtilage of 46 Surley Row, at that date recorded as a beer house in the ownership of Charles Ford and occupied by Charles Fuller (Tithe Commission, 1844, TNA ref IR 30/27/28 and IR 29/27/28). Its origins are likely to predate the tithe survey, given that the main house is dated to the C17 or early C18 in its listing description (Historic England, 1957, List Entry No. 1113595), and it would be consistent with the agricultural and domestic character of Surley Row for a barn to have been established as part of the original complex of the property.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map of c.1895 confirms the barn's continued presence within the curtilage of No. 46, at that date still annotated as a Beer House (B.H.), with the surrounding area entirely rural in character. By the mid-20th century the Gardeners Arms public house had been established on the adjacent plot, the licensed use having transferred from No. 46 to the newly built mock-Tudor building in the late 1920s or early 1930s. The barn at this point became physically associated with the

Gardeners Arms site, its direct functional relationship with No. 46 obscured by the changing pattern of land ownership. The Gardeners Arms has since been demolished and a development of seven new dwellings constructed on the adjacent plot, with the barn now falling within the curtilage of 7 The Gardeners whilst retaining its physical connection to 46 Surley Row at its south-western corner.

6.3 Evidential, Historical and Aesthetic Value

Evidential Value

The evidential value of the barn resides in its surviving physical fabric, which retains a legible record of its pre-industrial agricultural origin. The masonry walls are constructed in English Bond brickwork with lime mortar jointing. The roof is formed as a cut and pitched structure, comprising rafters, purlins, a ridge beam and struts, rather than a factory-produced trussed system, a form consistent with pre-industrial agricultural construction. On visual inspection, the principal timbers, including the ridge beam, purlins and struts, appear more consistent with earlier, hand-worked construction, while the rafters appear machine-sawn and may represent a later replacement of these members. This distinction has not been confirmed by structural investigation and is described in Section 5.4 as a provisional observation pending further analysis. The handmade plain clay tile roof covering shares the same material characteristics and weathered patina as the roof of 46 Surley Row, providing a strong visual and material connection between the two structures and suggesting a common or closely related period of construction. The mixture of English and Flemish Bond observed in the brickwork suggests phased construction or alteration, reflecting the pattern of incremental change typical of inn outbuildings that were regularly adapted to respond to economic and functional demands. The brick sett floor, though uneven and heavily worn, further contributes to the evidential record of the

building's long functional use.

Overall, the evidential value of the barn lies primarily in its external fabric rather than its interior, and in its maintained presence within the surrounding setting and historic landscape of Surley Row.

Historical Value

The historical value derives from the barn's documented and continuous association with 46 Surley Row across at least two centuries, its role as a working outbuilding to one of the oldest properties on Surley Row, and its tangible connection to the agricultural and licensed trade history of the area.

Aesthetic Value

The aesthetic value is rooted in the barn's vernacular character, with the steeply pitched roofline, the weatherboarded gable ends, the warm red brick masonry and the aged clay tile roof collectively forming a composition that is visually coherent with the listed building to which it is attached, contributing positively to the informal, historic roofline of the Surley Row Conservation Area as experienced from the public realm.

Communal Value

The Barn is a heritage asset of moderate significance, deriving its primary value from its historical association with 46 Surley Row, its legible external fabric and its contribution to the character and roofline of the Surley Row Conservation Area. Whilst the interior holds limited significance, the external form, materials and siting of the barn collectively represent an important record of the agricultural and licensed trade history of one of the oldest and least altered streetscapes in Caversham, and its significance is further enhanced by its physical attachment to, and curtilage relationship with, the Grade II listed building.

7 Impact Assessment

7.1 Assessment of Framework

The impact of the proposed works is assessed below against the significance of the barn as a curtilage listed structure and its contribution to the Surley Row Conservation Area. The level of harm is categorised in accordance with the framework set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2026), Chapter 20, *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*, which requires any less than substantial harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The assessment draws on the structural findings of the Simpson TWS Structural Inspection Report (Beckly, M., Simpson TWS, 2025, ref P25-0738-REP-01), the Feasibility Study prepared by Tait Architects (2025, ref 24.513), and the heritage evidence base established in Sections 3, 4 and 6.3 of this statement, including the historic mapping evidence, designation records and policy documents identified through the research process.

Where the structural engineer's recommendations (Simpson TWS, 2025) differ from Historic England's conservation guidance or the advice of Reading Borough Council's Conservation Officer, in particular regarding the specification of a reinforced concrete slab and the extent of underpinning at the junction with 46 Surley Row, the structural design will need to be developed further at detailed design stage to justify this approach. The design will need to provide careful detailing to prevent egress of moisture into the existing historic masonry walls. Damp-proofing measures should be carefully considered and measures taken to maintain the breathability of the historic masonry and address any external sources of moisture.

7.2 Pre-application comments

Pre-planning application written response, dated December 2025, provides in-depth feedback on the two proposed options, clearly stating that the preference would be for Option 2 — that is, not to raise the roof level, to avoid

changing the views from the public realm, obscuring the chimney of the main building, and altering the strong visual relationship with the historic building and its original use. In order to achieve this, it is understood that lowering the floor level would be an acceptable approach to provide sufficient bedroom for the proposed use. This reinforces the point that the primary significance of the building lies in its external features, which allow for an understanding of the barn's function as the outbuilding to 46 Surley Row, formerly a pub which served the area before the pub on the neighbouring plot was demolished and replaced with residential development.

This section therefore focuses on the determined approach to maintain the existing roofline and to strictly adhere to the existing external material palette, whilst allowing for necessary replacement or repair.

7.3 Architectural components

Masonry Walls

The walls retain a significant concentration of original historic fabric in the building, including the mix of brick, flint and tile construction characteristic of the barn's pre-1844 origins. Their repair and repointing throughout using appropriate lime-based mortars, as recommended in the structural report (Simpson TWS, 2025, p.4, para 4.2), would consolidate this fabric and is considered a positive intervention carrying no heritage harm. The use of cement mortar, as evidenced in previous repairs, would be harmful and should be avoided. Bowing walls should be stabilised using localised buttressing piers tied to the original masonry rather than rebuilt.

The abutment with 46 Surley Row

The barn's southwest wall abuts the flank wall of 46 Surley Row directly, with no gap between the two structures, and this junction represents one of the most sensitive areas of the proposed works given its direct physical connection to the

listed building. This junction also forms part of the boundary between the two properties, and the physical connection at this point is one of the bases for the barn's curtilage listed status; no works should sever, disturb or damage it. The exact nature of the junction, whether the barn's masonry was built independently against the existing wall or shares any tied or bonded fabric, has not been confirmed by intrusive investigation. Any localised buttressing, underpinning or repointing required at or near this junction to address the wall instability identified in the structural report should therefore be approached on a precautionary basis, using hand excavation and staged working to establish actual conditions as work proceeds, rather than assuming a particular construction method in advance. Any groundworks or structural intervention at this junction should be designed and supervised by a suitably qualified structural engineer who is either CARE registered or has demonstrable experience in the assessment, repair and conservation of historic and listed buildings. The design and specification of the works will need to take account of the existing historic fabric and the need to retain and protect its structural integrity, in line with the recommendation of Reading Borough Council's Conservation Officer (Davies, 2025), and should follow the principles set out in BS 7913:2013 Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings. Works should be designed and sequenced to avoid any loading or vibration that could disturb the junction with 46 Surley Row, and should be agreed with the owners of 46 Surley Row under the Party Wall etc. Act 1996 as necessary. No new openings should be introduced into this wall, and repairs should be carried out in lime mortar only. Subject to this precautionary and reversible approach, the works at this junction are assessed as causing no heritage harm.

Roof Structure

Of the two options presented, the pre-planning response issued by Reading Borough Council in December 2025

identified Option 2 as the preferred approach, on the basis that maintaining the existing roofline avoids harm to the setting of the listed building and the character and appearance of the Surley Row Conservation Area.

The existing roof structure will be repaired and altered as necessary to accommodate the proposed internal finishes and new glazed section above the entrance. The existing timber ridge beam is in very poor condition, and its retention will be considered where feasible; however, replacement is anticipated if its condition prevents satisfactory retention. The existing rafters will similarly be retained where practicable, although replacement is likely to be necessary in view of the additional loading associated with the proposed internal finishes.

The structural engineer has identified raised-chord timber trusses or a steel cranked beam as potential structural solutions, together with a replacement timber ridge beam. New timber trusses and purlins are proposed to support the glazed area above the entrance. The final arrangement will be developed to provide the necessary structural support while minimising the impact on the barn's historic character, roof form and surviving historic fabric.

Structural works and floor construction

The structural proposals have been informed by the Trial Pit Inspection Report prepared by Simpson TWS, dated 9 April 2026, which identified very shallow footings, with the existing masonry walls constructed directly from the ground and no concrete foundations present at the locations investigated. The report also identified that the founding levels vary across the building and that the existing masonry is generally in poor condition, requiring significant repair and structural intervention.

The current structural design incorporates a ground-bearing reinforced concrete raft foundation, with reinforced concrete perimeter foundation walls to be constructed first and the existing masonry walls underpinned in sequence where necessary. The ground-bearing reinforced concrete slab will be cast last and tied into the bases of the perimeter retaining walls to form the raft foundation. The design also includes temporary internal propping during the works, with the external ground to be battered back where required to relieve lateral pressure on the existing walls.

A new internal load-bearing timber frame is proposed, tied to the existing masonry walls and fixed to the tops of the reinforced concrete walls. This will provide additional structural support while allowing the existing masonry to be retained and repaired where practicable. The detailed design and construction sequence will be critical to maintaining the stability of the building and minimising unnecessary intervention in the historic fabric.

The floor construction and its junction with the existing masonry will require careful detailing to address moisture movement and protect the historic fabric. The trial pit report notes the absence of a damp-proof membrane in the existing masonry and highlights the need for appropriate moisture protection, particularly where floor levels are lowered and external ground levels are higher. The final detailing should therefore be developed in conjunction with the structural design and the conservation requirements of the building.

The brick paviour floor retains original evidential value as part of the barn's long functional use, as noted in Section 6.3. The removal of the existing brick paviour floor would result in the loss of historic fabric and is therefore acknowledged as an adverse heritage impact.

The extent of this impact should be minimised through consideration of opportunities to retain or reuse the existing paviments where practicable. A detailed photographic record, including the arrangement, dimensions, materials and condition of the floor, should be completed before removal. The acceptability of this loss should be considered in the context of the necessity of lowering the floor level, the significance of the fabric affected and the wider conservation benefits of the scheme.

Gable End Weatherboarding

Where replacement is unavoidable, new boarding should replicate the profile, species and finish of the original as closely as possible. This element is assessed as less than substantial harm at the low end.

Openings and Doors

The former cart opening on the northwest elevation is one of the most historically significant features of the barn, directly evidencing its agricultural function as a working outbuilding to 46 Surley Row. The opening's historic position and width should be retained, as this is the primary evidential record of the barn's original use. Where the floor level is lowered to achieve internal headroom, in line with the preferred Option 2 approach set out in Section 7.2, a corresponding increase in the opening's height relative to the new internal floor level is an acceptable and necessary consequence of that approach, rather than an alteration to the historic proportions of the opening itself.

Any new glazing or doors introduced within the opening should be set back within the reveal and detailed in a manner that reads as a clear, honest insertion rather than a historicist recreation, in line with Historic England's guidance on legibility of change (Historic England, 2015a). Subject to this approach, the works to this element are assessed as causing less than substantial harm at the low end of the scale.

Glazing above new entrance

A glazed section is proposed above the new entrance doors and sidelights, forming part of the overall glazed entrance. The upper glazing will extend from eaves level and follow the pitch of the roof, helping to minimise visual disruption and visibility from the road while allowing additional natural light into the barn.

The pre-application response noted that contemporary elements can be supported where they are integrated into historic buildings in a balanced way, and suggested that enlarging the entrance to incorporate a larger glazed element would be acceptable.

7.4 Setting of 46 Surley Row

The conversion does not alter the external form, massing or materials of the barn in any fundamental way. The barn would continue to read as an outbuilding within the curtilage of the listed building, reflecting its historic functional relationship with 46 Surley Row. Any external lighting should be kept to a minimum and designed to avoid light spill towards the listed building. Subject to these measures, the proposals are assessed as having no adverse impact on the setting of 46 Surley Row (Historic England, 2017).

7.5 Impact on the Conservation Area

The barn is the only surviving pre-20th century agricultural outbuilding in the immediate vicinity of Surley Row and makes a positive contribution to the special interest of the Conservation Area, consistent with the criteria identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal, namely the narrow, footpath-free lane, the varied historic building line and the domestic scale and character of the area (Reading Borough Council, 2010, p.4). Its conversion to active use would secure its long-term survival and prevent the continued deterioration evidenced in the structural report. The retention of the plain clay tile roof, weatherboarded gable ends, brick masonry walls and historic cart opening, combined with the use of appropriate lime mortars and traditional timber joinery, would preserve and enhance the barn's contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in accordance with Policy EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (Reading Borough Council, 2019), and with Policy EN1 of the same plan and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

7.6 Public Benefits and Overall Balance

The proposed conversion would deliver a number of public benefits which must be weighed against the heritage harm identified above. These include securing the long-term structural stability and survival of a heritage asset that is currently in an advanced state of deterioration, through a coordinated programme of foundation works, localised underpinning, structural support and masonry repairs informed by the structural engineer's investigations and design; bringing a dilapidated and underused outbuilding back into viable, active use; removing unsympathetic later fabric and previous cement mortar repairs and replacing these with appropriate lime-based mortar and traditional methods; and preserving the barn's historic external form, roofline and materials, thereby maintaining its contribution to the character and appearance of the Surley Row Conservation Area.

Each element of the proposed works has been assessed above in terms of its effect on the significance of the barn, the setting of 46 Surley Row and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The assessment identifies limited heritage harm arising principally from the loss of the existing brick pavement floor, alterations to the entrance and the replacement of historic fabric where retention is not practicable. These impacts must be considered alongside the benefits of securing the barn's long-term conservation, addressing its structural deterioration and bringing it back into viable use.

The proposals seek to retain the building's overall form, roofline and principal historic features, with repairs and replacement materials selected to respect its traditional character. Subject to the resolution of the detailed structural design, appropriate protection of the adjoining listed building and implementation of the conservation measures identified in this statement, the proposals are considered to offer a reasonable balance between the conservation of historic fabric and the sustainable reuse of the building.

The proposals are also considered to comply with Policies EN1 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (Reading Borough Council, 2019).

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