



JF / A918

Mr I. Black
Spicers Farm
Rowhill Lane
Balcombe
HAYWARDS HEATH
RH17 6JN

9th December 2025

Dear Mr Black

**RE: STRUCTURAL REPORT FOLLOWING INSPECTION OF BARNs AT SPICERS FARM,
ROWHILL LANE, BALCOMBE, HAYWARDS HEATH RH17 6JN**

Alan Baxter Partnership was requested to carry out a structural survey of barns at the above to confirm their structural condition, with a view to the proposed conversion for domestic use. We herewith report our findings and recommendations following our visit on the 27th November 2025.

We are unable to comment on area or items that are covered or were not accessible at the time of our visit. At the time of our visit the weather was dry, bright and cool.

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Description and Observations

- 1) The barns comprise a large oak framed barn with two connected brick barns which form a range facing Spicers Farmhouse. The farmhouse is Grade II Listed and located 30m to the west, which would suggest that the barns are curtilage listed. The larger or main barn is located to the north, with the two brick barns connected to the south side. Immediately to the rear or east side of the barns there is further range of 20th century steel and concrete framed barns which are not included with this report.
- 2) The northern and southern sides of the barns face fields used for grazing and arable farming. The barns are currently in use for the storage of firewood and domestic and agricultural machinery.
- 3) The main barn structure comprises a traditional oak frame of four unequal width bays with cart doors to front and rear of the second bay. The doors to the rear have been removed and are infilled. There are full-height gables to both ends which are framed in timber. The front doorway is fully open currently as the door have been removed.
- 4) There is a low brick plinth to the perimeter of the barn supporting the timber sole plate. A mono-pitched lean-to attached to the left end of the barn which has a raised brick plinth wall with a wall plate and rafter over. The roofs of the lean-to and the three barns are all clad with clay tiles on timber rafters.
- 5) At the rear right corner there is a stagger or step back at the junction of the main barn to the ancillary barns. At this junction, where the concrete and steel-framed barns behind also meet, some water ingress has occurred due to gutter shortcomings. The entry of rainwater has caused local damage and decay to the timber corner post, sole plates and the brickwork plinth locally to the corner.
- 6) The floor slab of the main barn is laid to concrete with a slight fall to the right measured. The left side of the barn is currently set up as two stalls for horses. The barn is clad with timber weatherboarding all round with the barn structure generally visible internally. Some areas of the weatherboarding are loose and missing but it is in fair condition overall.
- 7) The timber structure was seen to be in fair to good condition with good verticality to the posts and no obvious gapping noted at joints. Bracing was also seen to be in place and secure. The barn appears to be of 17th or 18th century construction.
- 8) The barn to the south is accessed from a doorway from the main barn with two steps down to floor level, some 400mm below main barn floor level. The barn has solid brickwork walls to wall plate level to all sides with the barn being structurally independent from the main barn. Render has been applied to the walls in some areas with a step in the floor slab and dividing rails forming bays which indicates that the barn was previously used as a milking parlour.

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- 9) The pitched roof is formed in sawn timber with three queen post trusses supporting a mid-height purlin with full length rafters over. There is evidence of timber posts within the brickwork walls which may have been added later when the barn was no longer used for milking.
- 10) The brickwork to all elevations internally, was seen to have small areas or individual bricks where the face has been lost, due to weathering or poor firing of the bricks. The internal area of the barn is open to the ridge aside from timber tie beams at eaves level. The walls were measured and found to be vertical with no noteworthy cracking seen.
- 11) The southernmost barn is of very similar form and construction and is accessed from the milking shed barn and by way of a top-hung sliding door at the front. There is a further single width opening further to the south. The concrete floor slab is stepped in a similar manner to the milking shed but less related equipment was found. Deterioration of bricks and areas of brickwork was also seen. The roof and eaves height is set lower to the southern barn, following the ambient ground levels.
- 12) The barns appear likely to be built from a strip foundation with a concrete slab cast over. The brick barns are of early to mid-Victorian style construction, with alterations made in the 20th century.
- 13) Externally, the roofs were found to be in fair condition with straight ridge lines and fairly flat, even slopes. Some roof tiles were seen to have slipped and be missing but the roof coverings were noted to be in good condition overall. Mortar loss was seen to some areas of the front of the barn but generally the brickwork was found to be secure and plumb.
- 14) The main barn measures approx. 14.3m long by 5.8m wide internally. The brick barns 10.6m and 12.9m long by 4.2m wide respectively. Guttering and rainwater downpipes were found to both brick barns with no guttering evident to the larger timber barn. Mains water is not installed in the barn but is available nearby but electricity is installed.
- 15) The farmyard slopes from left to right, when viewing the front of the barn. External ground levels are broadly level to the perimeter of the barn. The levels to the rear of these barns are more level but are set below the front barn slab levels.
- 16) Spicers Farm is located off Whitethroat Lane, in turn off Rowhill Lane. The main access road runs from London Road nearby. Several other residential and non-residential buildings are found in vicinity of Spicers Farm.

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- 17) The British Geological Survey map sheet 302 (Horsham) covering the area shows the site, grid reference TQ2999, 2857 to be underlain by Upper Grinstead Clay, bordering Upper Tunbridge Wells Sand formation. Upper Grinstead Clay is a silty sandy clay with mudstones and is a good founding subsoil.
- 18) The clay content is variable locally making the subsoil of medium plasticity, which means that it can be affected by moisture changes due to tree root extraction. The Tunbridge Wells Sand is a coarse grained sand and is also a good founding subsoil but can be vulnerable to softening and local erosion where there is defective drainage.
- 19) Overall, the barns were found to be level and plumb with no indication of recent on-going settlement or movement observed. The timber members of the barns were found to be in fair condition throughout with little decay found. Some softening of the wall plates was found in small areas . The walls supporting the roof are of adequate size and support an adequately-constructed roof throughout.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- 20) We consider the barns to be in good condition overall and were found to be structurally robust and permanent. We consider that all three of the buildings appears structurally capable of conversion to a residential annexe.
- 21) The roofs shows no signs of sagging and are capable of supporting insulation and ceiling. Whilst the building does not require any additional structural support to function as a dwelling, the erection of internal walls and wall linings will allow for additional support throughout the building and will assist in supporting new insulation backgrounds. Original bracing between the timber post and the wall plate should be reinstated where it has fallen or been removed.
- 22) Some local repair is required to the oak members of the main barn, with some repair required to the rear right post at its bottom together with some local replacement of the sole plates. The supporting brickwork plinth should be repointed where mortar has been lost and any loose or missing brickwork should be rebuilt using appropriate lime-based mortars.
- 23) Some very minor cracking was observed to the walls of the brick barns but is not considered to be indicative of active on-going movement. Within the barn all missing and face-damaged bricks should be replaced.

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- 24) We consider all internal walls and applied loading will be adequately supported by the existing foundations and concrete floor slab. The floor and subbase appears to be sound and stable with no observed cracking and therefore considered suitable to support a domestic floor loading.
- 25) It is believed that the barns are structurally capable of conversion and that the above works to the barns will result in buildings that will remain structurally secure and in use for the longer term.
- 26) In conclusion, we consider these barns to be sound and stable, with no obvious structural barriers to prevent the conversion to a domestic use.

Yours sincerely

