



Reybridge Farm stables, Lacock

Heritage Statement

Avalon PLANNING & HERITAGE

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Prepared by	Reviewed by	Date	Revised
SH	NB	31/03/26	



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2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Avalon Planning & Heritage have been instructed to produce a heritage statement examining the significance of the stables at Reybridge Farm, Lacock. It is proposed that the stables are converted to residential accommodation.
- 2.2 The stables were erected as an open-sided cowshed in the mid-19th century, and were converted into stables in the 1980s, at which point the previously-open frontage was infilled with a breezeblock wall.
- 2.3 The local authority has deemed the stable block to be within the curtilage of Reybridge House, a Grade II listed building. This report will consider any impact on the heritage value of the stable block that may arise as a result of the proposed residential conversion.

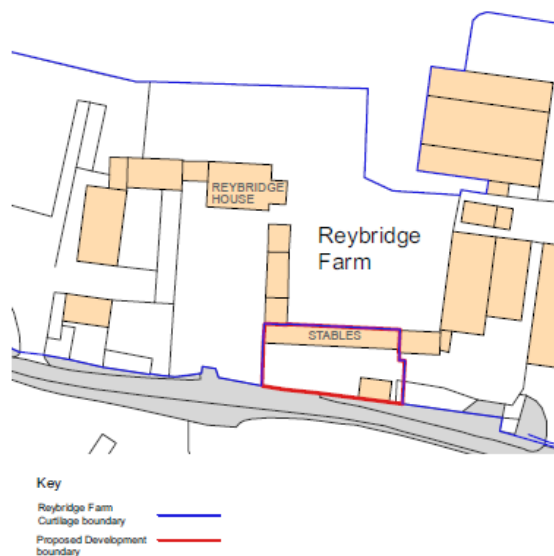


Fig 1 (left): site plan. Fig 2 (above) View of stables from lane

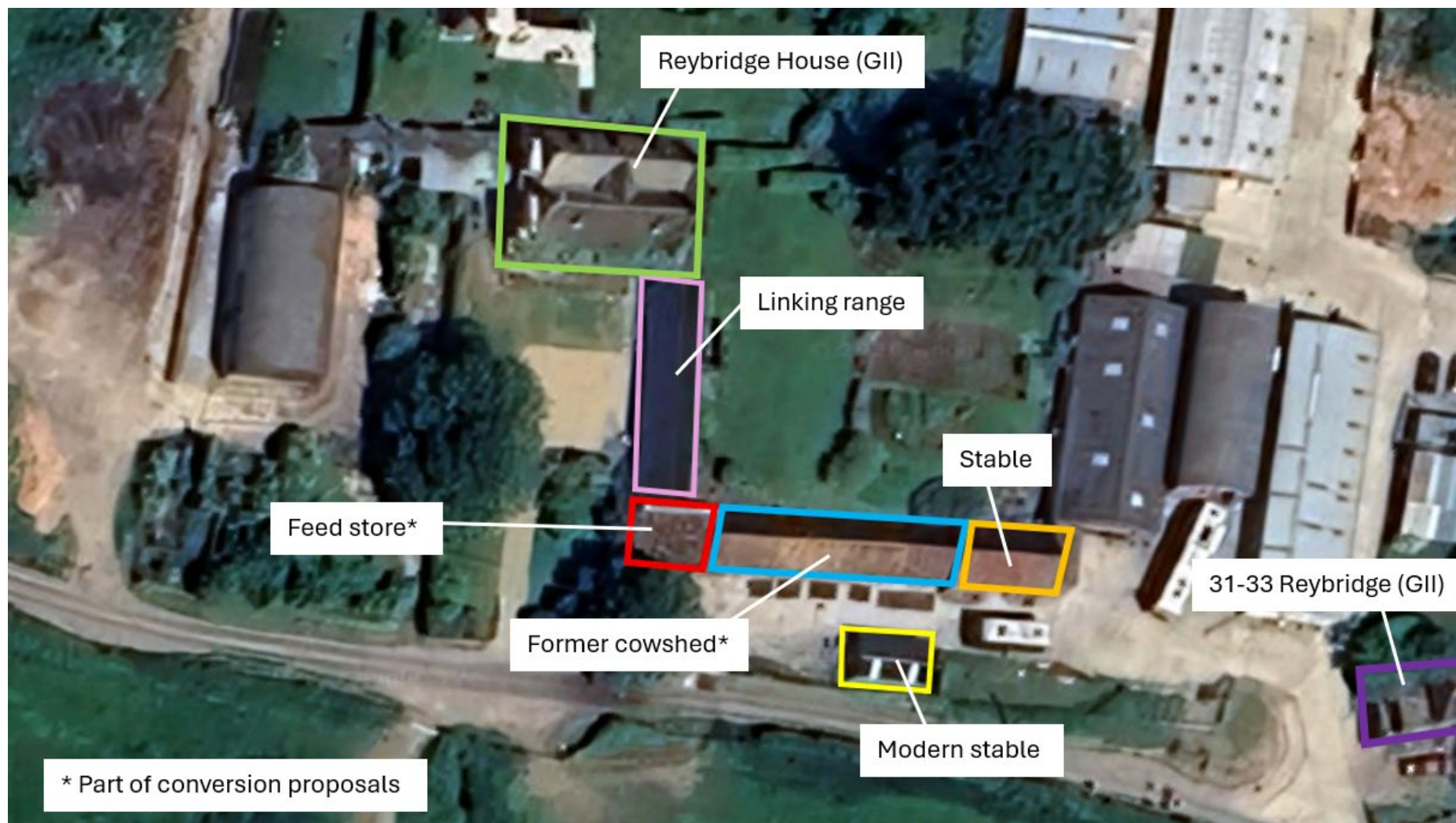


Fig 3: Aerial view showing buildings referred to in text (Google maps)



Fig 4: Tithe map, 1840

3.0 Context

- 3.1 Reybridge House is a mid-18th century farmhouse, originally known as New End Farm. It is an imposing building, of two parallel ranges with stone slate roofs. The stables are a later construction, evidenced by the Tithe map of 1840 where the farmhouse exists but the stables do not.
- 3.2 At the time of Wiltshire tithe survey in 1840 (fig 1), New End Farm was owned by John Lodge and tenanted by John Fry. The Fry family have a long association with Lacock, and there are several graves of Fry family members at the church of St Scone in Lacock village, less than a mile away. John Fry is recorded as using the land mainly as pasture but with some arable fields.
- 3.3 The arrival of the railway in the 19th century had a transformative effect on agriculture in the county. The line from Swindon to Westbury via Melksham opened in 1850, and allowed milk to be carried to markets in urban areas, including London. The United Dairies set up a very sizeable operation adjacent to Melksham Station.
- 3.4 It is thought likely that the stables at Reybridge Farm date from this period, when more dairy cows were brought to the farm. When built, the building would have been open-fronted with mangers providing food, which also prevented cattle from leaving the building.
- 3.5 The buildings are visible on the first edition OS map (fig 2). The land around Reybridge was first surveyed by the OS in the mid-1870s, although the map was not published until 1885. This leaves a 35-year window between the tithe map survey in 1840 and the Ordnance Survey around 1875 during which the building was constructed. The expansion of the dairy industry after arrival of the railways

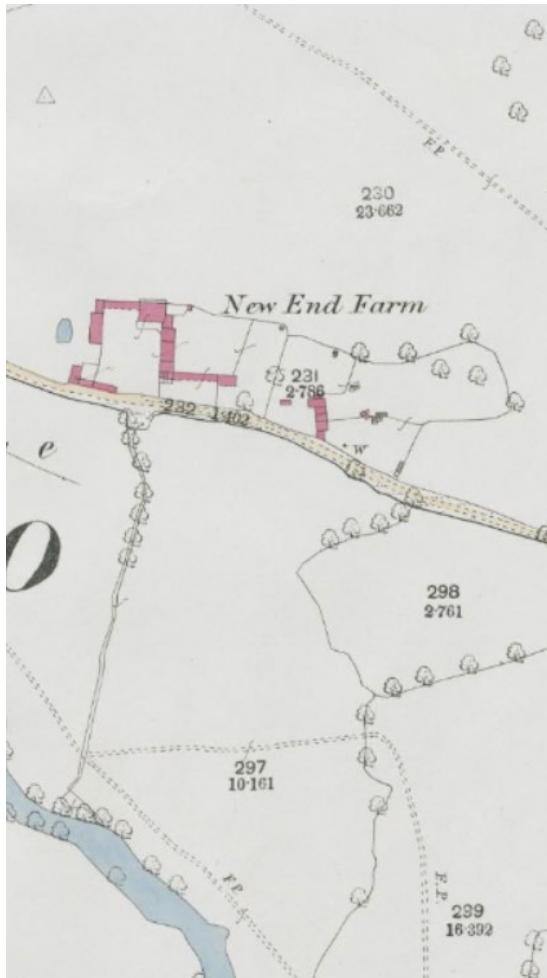


Fig 5: 1st edition OS, published 1885

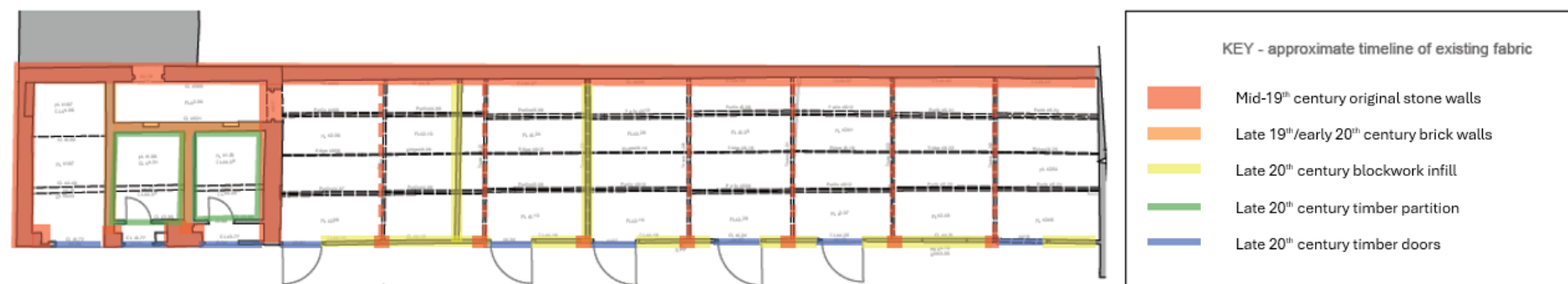
leads it to be likely that the building was constructed after the opening of the railway line in 1850. While an exact date of construction is not known without further research, the evidence that the buildings are mid-19th century is conclusive.

- 3.6 The arrival of the railways also brought Welsh slate to Wiltshire, and buildings began to be roofed in slate rather than tile, stone slate, or thatch, from this point. The rear roof of the Reybridge stables are slated, although the present slates are not the originals. The front roofslope is roofed in clay double roman tiles. Internally, the roof is supported by muscular king-post trusses. These are necessarily robust to withstand the movement of cattle, and were constructed in the mid-19th century. They are machine-made, but hand-finished.
- 3.7 At the open front elevation of the building, the roof was supported by vertical timber posts set on staddle-stones. These remain in-situ, but with modern breezeblock infills between. The doors within the breezeblock walls also date from the 1980s. Floor finishes, where seen, are generally modern.
- 3.8 At either end of the former cowshed are independent structures. That on the left when facing the building is likely to have been a feed store. It retains a random rubble front elevation, showing how it has always been fully enclosed. It has a single-pitch roof, also of double-roman clay tiles, and its rear elevation is masked by another range which links the stables to Reybridge House. The building to the right has earlier stable fittings than the converted cowshed, and may well have always been a stable. It will remain so under the current proposals. It is a simple building with a pitched roof, with ridge slightly higher than the former cowshed.
- 3.9 The yard between the lane and the stables has been roughly surfaced in concrete. The level of the yard is slightly raised above the level of the lane, so the yard is not particularly conspicuous from public viewpoints.



Fig 6: Farm from Lacock footpath

Fig 7: Age of building fabric



- 3.10 The stables are physically connected to Reybridge House by virtue of another range of single-storey agricultural buildings, of traditional appearance but evidently largely rebuilt in recent times. Behind the stables the land is now laid out as gardens to Reybridge House.
- 3.11 Reybridge House and the stables are now in separate ownership. The reconstructed range linking the house and the stables remains in the ownership of the house, whereas the stables are part of an equestrian business run from Reybridge Farm. The listed cottages at 31-33 Reybridge are part of this complex and used as the farmhouse, with an ice-cream shop run from an ancillary building.
- 3.12 The stables contribute to the setting of 31-33 Reybridge, and to the setting of Reybridge House. This is primarily through rustic materiality and historic connection, although the utilitarian 1980s alterations detract.
- 3.13 The stables are visible in the wider landscape, including the registered park at Lacock Abbey. Attractive views of the complex are available from the public footpath linking Reybridge and Lacock, when Ash Hill and its surviving ridge-and-furrow earthworks form a backdrop to the farm complex.



Fig 8: King-post roof trusses



Fig 9: General view of former cowshed with stable to the right

4.0 Significance

Evidential Value

- 4.1 The stables have moderate evidential value. The building retains physical fabric that illustrates mid-19th century agricultural construction, including the surviving structural form of an open-fronted cowshed, including timber posts set on staddle stones (fig 10) and the robust king-post roof trusses (fig 8), characteristic of buildings designed to accommodate cattle. There is also evidence of the original functional design, such as the open frontage (now infilled) and internal arrangements.

- 4.2 Although the 1980s alterations introduced breezeblock infill and modern doors, reducing the legibility of the original open elevation, enough historic fabric survives to demonstrate construction techniques and agricultural practices of the period.

Historic Value

- 4.3 The stables possess moderate historic value, which is primarily illustrative. They reflect the mid-19th century expansion of dairy farming in Wiltshire, associated with the arrival of the railway, which enabled the transportation of milk to urban markets. The likely construction of the building within the period 1850–1875 places it firmly within this phase of agricultural intensification.
- 4.4 The building also contributes to understanding the development of Reybridge Farm (formerly New End Farm), which was in use as pasture and mixed farmland in 1840. The stables illustrate the transition toward more specialised and productive agricultural practices. There is historic value in the plan form of the building; its origins and subsequent changes can still be readily understood.



Fig 10: Timber post on staddle stone

- 4.5 There is also group value with Reybridge House and associated farm buildings, reflecting the evolution of a historic farmstead.

Aesthetic Value and architectural interest

- 4.6 The stables have moderate aesthetic value.
- 4.7 Positive aspects include the use of traditional materials such as rubble stone and the simple, functional agricultural form typical of the period. The stables also have a visual relationship with adjacent historic farm buildings.
- 4.8 Aesthetic value is diminished by the 1980s breezeblock infill to the principal elevation and the replacement roofing materials. The concrete surfacing within the yard also has a negative impact on aesthetic value. However, despite these alterations, the building retains a degree of rustic agricultural character that contributes to the wider farmstead.

Communal Value

- 4.9 The stables have low communal value. While not known to have specific communal or cultural associations, the building forms part of a working rural landscape that contributes to the local identity of Reybridge and its agricultural heritage. Its association with the long-standing farming history of the area, including links to the nearby village of Lacock, provides some contextual communal interest.

Contribution Made by Setting

- 4.10 The stables make a meaningful contribution to the setting of designated heritage assets, particularly Reybridge House (Grade II listed) and the listed cottages at 31–33 Reybridge.



Fig 11: Rear elevation

- 4.11 The building contributes to the historic farmstead character through its form, materials, and functional relationship with adjacent agricultural ranges. The physical and historic connection to Reybridge House enhances the understanding of the house as part of a working farm complex. The stables also contribute to the setting of nearby listed buildings through their shared agricultural context and coherence as a group
- 4.12 In wider views, the building forms part of a visually attractive rural composition, particularly from the public footpath between Reybridge and Lacock. Here, the farmstead is seen in conjunction with the surrounding landscape, including Ash Hill and surviving ridge-and-furrow earthworks, reinforcing its historic agricultural context.
- 4.13 Overall, the stables make a positive but secondary contribution to the significance of nearby designated heritage assets, primarily through historic association and group value rather than strong architectural presence.

Summary of Significance

- 4.14 The Reybridge Farm stables are a non-designated heritage asset of moderate significance, deriving principally from their evidential and historical value as a mid-19th century agricultural building associated with the expansion of dairy farming in Wiltshire. Their contribution to the setting of nearby listed buildings and to the character of the historic farmstead enhances their overall significance, despite later alterations that have diminished their architectural integrity.



Fig 12: Rubblestone wall to feed store

5.0 The proposed development

- 5.1 It is proposed to convert the stables into a single residential unit. The new property will remain part of the family farm and is designed to house members of the family.
- 5.2 It is not proposed to extend the property, and features which contribute to the significance of the curtilage listed building will be retained. The historic king-post roof structure will remain visible and expressed internally.
- 5.3 The unsympathetic 1980s breezeblock infill will be removed, but the original vertical timber trusses on stone bases will be retained. A new wall, clad in horizontal timber, will be constructed set behind the timber posts. This will return the timber posts to being the primary visual element of the principal elevation. The new wall will contain simple timber casement windows with a solid panel below, designed to reference the character of stable doors.
- 5.4 From left to right, the former feed store will become the principal bedroom, with the attractive random rubble wall (fig 12) retained and restored. The next two bays of the building will house two bedrooms, a bath room, and a home office/therapy suite. This part of the building is already compartmentalised; historically by the division between feed store and cow shed, and more recently by the construction of loose boxes in the 1980s.
- 5.5 The eastern end of the building is generally more open, with lower-height stalls inserted in the 1980s. These would be removed, to enable the creation of an open-plan living area and kitchen space. This would better reveal the original volume of the building. The plan form would remain legible.



Fig 13: Rear elevation to feed store with stables to left and northern range in separate ownership to right.

- 5.6 The final eastern bay of the building would be used for an entrance lobby and utility, plus bathroom. The stables beyond would remain stables.
- 5.7 On the North elevation, the building would be unchanged save for the insertion of three conservation rooflights, and the replacement of the current slate roof covering with double-roman clay tiles.



Fig 14: Modern breezeblock dividing walls between stables



Fig 15: Stable to be retained in RH range

6.0 Impact on significance

- 6.1 The proposed conversion of the Reybridge Farm stables to a single residential unit would result in a very minor degree of less than substantial harm to significance, with some elements of heritage enhancement.
- 6.2 The scheme has been designed to retain and reveal key elements of historic, evidential and aesthetic value, including the survival and internal expression of the king-post roof structure and the retention of the original timber posts on staddle stones. The removal of the unsympathetic 1980s breezeblock infill represents a clear enhancement, reinstating the legibility of the original open-fronted elevation. The introduction of a recessed timber-clad wall behind the posts is a sympathetic intervention that preserves the building's historic form while allowing for conversion to residential use.
- 6.3 Internally, the proposed layout broadly respects the existing subdivision of the building, while the removal of later 20th-century stall partitions at the eastern end will better reveal the original volume and spatial character of the former cowshed, resulting in a beneficial impact.
- 6.4 Alterations to the external envelope are limited and generally appropriate. The insertion of conservation rooflights and replacement of the roof covering with clay tiles will have a minor beneficial visual impact, but this is not considered to materially harm the building's significance. The retention and repair of the rubble stone wall to the former feed store will preserve an important element of its character.
- 6.5 There are a number of heritage benefits attached to the proposal. These include better revealing the original form of the building through expression of the vertical



Fig 16: Unattractive timber stable between historic stables and road; to be removed.

timber posts, repairs and maintenance of its fabric, and replacement of the life-expired existing non-original roof covering with clay tiles of appropriate character and appearance.

- 6.6 In addition, the concrete yard area will be sympathetically landscaped, with minimal domestic paraphernalia. The unattractive temporary stable (fig 16) between the former cowshed and the lane will be removed, better revealing the cowshed from the lane and improving the visual connection between the former cowshed and the listed cottages at 31-33 Reybridge.
- 6.7 Overall, the proposals would sustain the building's significance and enhance its legibility as a historic agricultural structure, while securing its viable long-term use. Any harm arising from the introduction of domestic features is less than substantial and at the lower end of the broad spectrum of impacts encompassed by that planning definition.
- 6.8 The harm has been minimised as far as possible through thoughtful and sensitive design, and is outweighed by the benefits outlined above, which will also ensure the conservation of the building.



Fig 17: Junction between former cowshed & feed store

7.0 Planning history and planning policy

- 7.1 Previous proposals for a residential conversion of the building were refused planning permission and listed building consent in 2024. Those plans included extensions to the building. The reasons for refusal of planning permission were that the development was outside a settlement boundary, and the building was not capable of conversion. The council was not satisfied the design of the proposed extensions were appropriate.
- 7.2 The concurrent Listed Building Consent application was refused on the grounds that the proposed alterations failed to respect the architectural and historic interest of the curtilage listed building.
- 7.3 The applicant appealed the refusals, providing additional information which demonstrated that the building is capable of conversion. The Inspector found that the building was capable of conversion and that the principle of conversion accorded with planning policy. However, he found the proposed extensions to not comply with the principle of new development in the open countryside. While he found the design of the larger of the two extensions then proposed acceptable, he found that the smaller of the two would result in unnecessary loss of historic fabric.
- 7.4 The appeals were dismissed on the grounds that the proposals would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset, and that the wider public benefits associated with the proposals were insufficient to outweigh harm.
- 7.5 In response to the inspector's decision, the scheme has been redesigned. It is no longer proposed to extend the building, but simply convert it. As detailed earlier, the conversion has been sympathetically and thoughtfully designed to minimise



Fig 18: Detail of roof structure

any adverse impact on significance, and there are associated heritage benefits to be weighed in the planning balance.

- 7.6 The relevant policy of the statutory development plan is Core Policy 48, which states that proposals to convert and re-use rural buildings will be supported where they satisfy the five criteria. These are that firstly, the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without major rebuilding, and with only necessary extension or modification which preserves the character of the original building. Secondly, the proposed use would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape or settlement and would not be detrimental to the amenities of residential areas.
- 7.7 Core policy 48 requires that thirdly, the building can be served by adequate access and infrastructure, fourthly the site has reasonable access to local services, or finally that the conversion or re-use of a heritage asset would lead to its viable long term safeguarding.
- 7.8 As set out through this statement and the documentation accompanying this application, the proposals comply with all five points of Core Policy 48, as also acknowledged by the previous appeal decision.
- 7.9 The proposals also accord with Core Policy 57, which set out Wiltshire's requirement that new development must be sympathetic to and conserve historic buildings. Core Policy 58 requires that development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment, with which the proposals accord.
- 7.10 In accordance National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 208, this statement sets out the significance of the building, and details how the potential impacts have been considered to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and all aspects of the proposals.

- 7.11 Converting the building to a dwelling will cause a degree of harm to its character, as the agricultural character would be lost to a domestic use. However, the design would have many sympathetic elements which will better reveal its significance.
- 7.12 NPPF paragraph 215 notes that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. It is considered these proposals fully accord with this principle.



Fig 19: Relationship between Reybridge House (right), stables (left), and linking range (Centre)



Fig 20: detail of vertical timber post on staddle stone, blockwork infill and modern stable doors.

8.0 Concluding comments

- 8.1 The stables at Reybridge Farm are a curtilage-listed structure of moderate significance, which is principally derived from their evidential and historical value as a mid-19th century agricultural building associated with the expansion of dairy farming in Wiltshire. Although altered in the late 20th century, the building retains sufficient historic fabric to illustrate its original function and contributes positively, albeit in a secondary way, to the setting of nearby designated heritage assets, including Reybridge House and the listed cottages at 31–33 Reybridge.
- 8.2 The proposed conversion has been carefully developed in response to the building's significance and the findings of the previous appeal decision. The scheme avoids extension and instead focuses on a sensitive reuse of the existing structure, retaining and revealing key elements of historic fabric. The removal of unsympathetic 1980s alterations, reinstatement of the open-fronted character through a recessed elevation, and the expression of the internal roof structure will all serve to enhance the legibility and appreciation of the building's agricultural origins.
- 8.3 The level of harm arising from the proposals is considered to be less than substantial and at the very lowest end of that spectrum, primarily reflecting the inevitable change from agricultural to domestic use. This harm has been minimised through a thoughtful and proportionate design approach and is clearly outweighed by the heritage benefits of the scheme, including the removal of detracting features, repair of historic fabric, and the securing of a viable long-term use for the building.

- 8.4 In policy terms, the proposals accord with the requirements of the NPPF, in particular paragraphs 208 and 215, and with relevant policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, including Core Policies 48, 57 and 58. The development will conserve and, in certain respects, enhance the significance of the heritage asset and its setting, while ensuring its ongoing maintenance and contribution to the historic farmstead. Accordingly, there is a clear and convincing justification for the grant of planning permission and listed building consent.

Fig 21: Landscape view of Reybridge Farm from the footpath to Lacock.



This report has been produced by Simon Hickman, Heritage Director at Avalon Planning & Heritage. Simon has over 25 years of experience as a heritage professional, latterly as Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas at Historic England's regional office for the South West, where he worked for 15 years before joining Avalon in 2025.

Avalon Planning and Heritage are one of the South-West's largest independent planning and heritage consultancies. We are headquartered in Exeter, with regional offices in Plymouth and Bristol. We have a team of planning, heritage, and archaeological experts with individual specialisms and considerable knowledge and expertise.



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