PROPOSED CONVERSION

AT

AISLED BARN, DOWNHAM

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

BY

SUNDERLAND PEACOCK AND ASSOCIATES

Job No. 6838 - DAS-2.0 March 2026- Planning Issue
Rev A- Surface water map added_2026.05.22.

SUNDERLAND PEACOCK ARCHITECTS SURVEYORS

PROJECT NARRATIVE

This report provides a detailed synopsis of the proposed project, examining the existing buildings, associated elements and design to support a full planning application for its conversion to office space.

Downham is a village set in the Forest of Bowland Natural Landscape. The village and surrounding land are owned by the Assheton family, who are responsible for its management and upkeep as part of their Downham Estate. Aisled Barn is located centrally to the Estate, adjacent to Downham Hall.

The prominent location of the farmyard, being the site of the former Home Farm, has become largely redundant and requires a use to rejuvenate and restore this historic asset.

The project proposal will allow the building to be re-imagined with a use compatible with the Estate, while ensuring the future preservation of the buildings.

The project is led by a sensitive and strictly conservation-based conversion of the buildings, to ensure the retention of the historic fabric, aesthetic appeal which is appropriate in scale and detail. Each proposal has been reviewed in the context of the building's listing and setting which will allow a positive conversion.

The design remains symbiotic with the vernacular style and visual appeal of the wider Downham Estate.

Furthermore, a tenant is secured for the office space and has been integral to the design input of the proposal. The proposed tenant is a long-established local firm who have managed the Downham Estate for 70 years.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This design and access statement illustrates the proposal to sensitively convert Aisled Barn into a predominantly office building, conference room space and associated external uses.

The proposed conversion of the listed barn will be conservation led, balancing the requirement for a functional use with the preservation of its historical and architectural significance.

The structure will be refurbished to enhance the heritage asset to support the local area, with economic activity, while remaining compliant with relevant planning policies and guidelines.

1.2 Founded in 1954, Ingham and Yorke have been central to the management of the Downham Estate and as advisers to the Assheton family since the firm's inception. They have been active participants in shaping the Estate over the decades and have been intimately involved in the proposals for the conversion of Aisled Barn, drawing upon their professional experience of the historic built environment in conjunction with their specific requirements for the building. Both the Downham Estate and Ingham and Yorke are enthused that this represents a sympathetic reuse of a beautiful old building.

1.3 This statement has been prepared by Sunderland Peacock and Associates Ltd. It is to be read in conjunction with all drawings and supporting documentation. It is supported by a full heritage appraisal, associated existing and proposed drawings, transport design assessment and arboricultural assessments.

Fig 1. Photograph of Aisled Barn viewed from farmyard.

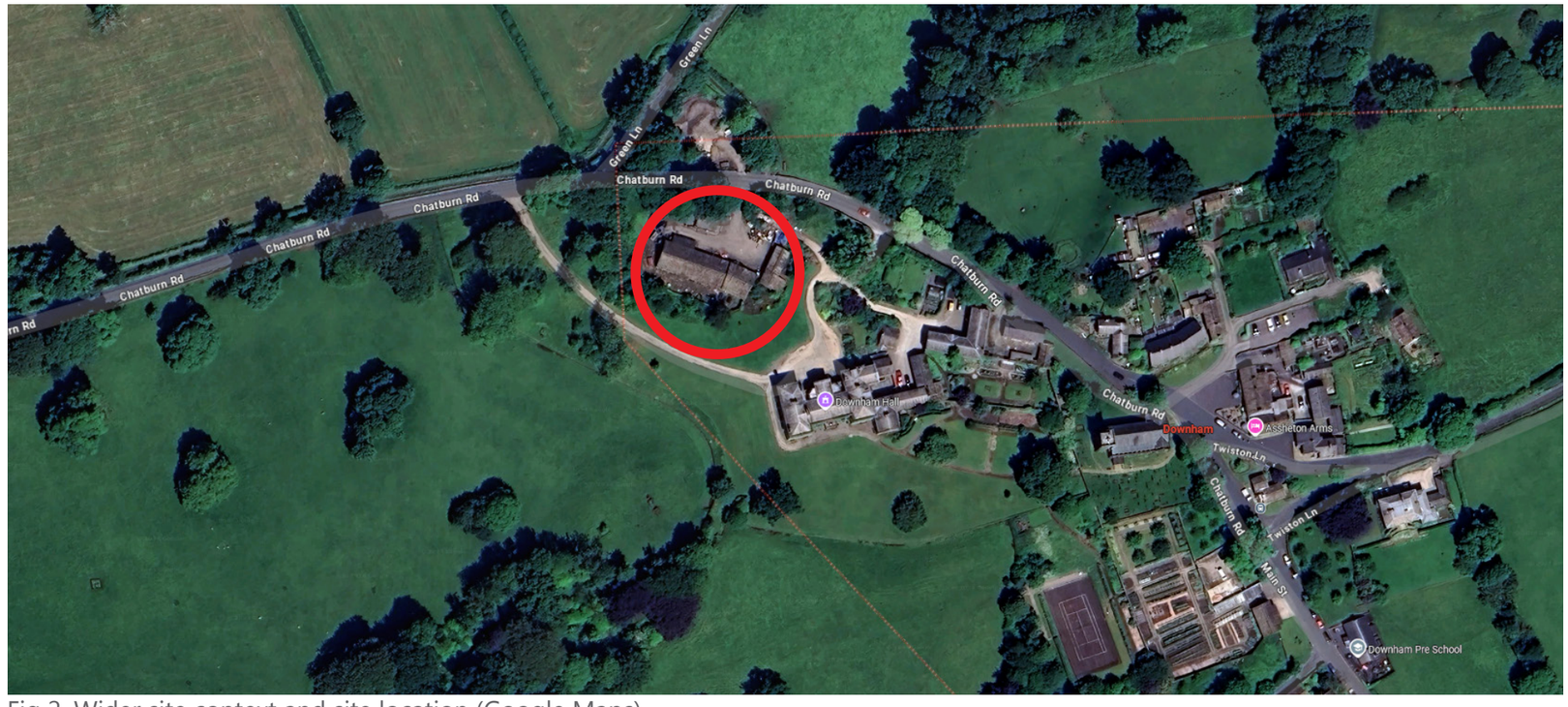


Fig 2. Wider site context and site location (Google Maps).

2.0 EXISTING

2.1 The village of Downham is located in the Forest of Bowland Natural Landscape and lies at the foot of Pendle Hill. It is often hailed as the most beautiful village in Lancashire, with unrivalled views unspoilt by overhead wires, satellite dishes, roadside signage, TV aerials and other incongruous street furniture.

The village is estate owned, and the Assheton family is responsible for it and the surrounding landscape. The Estate has been in the family's ownership since 1558 and has passed through a direct line of the Asshetons since 1680.

Downham is a small but thriving community steeped in history which offers an assortment of tourism and services such as the Assheton Arms, The tearoom at Greendale View Cafe, an ice cream shop near the village car park and village green. The Estate supports a host of further rural businesses such as farms and office spaces, which add to the rural and historic fabric.

2.2 Site Address:
Aisled Barn
Chatburn Road
Downham
Clitheroe
BB7 4DN

2.3 The site is located off Chatburn Road in Downham which lies 5 kilometres north east of the town of Clitheroe, in the Ribble Valley Borough of Lancashire. The main route through Downham, known as Main Street, leads on from Chatburn Road, Downham, which runs from Chatburn in a south-easterly direction down the slope to the valley bottom before ascending the eastern slopes of Pendle Hill as Pendle Road.

The village lies on the Lancashire Cycleway and is in the Pendle Hill outlier of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape.

The current use of the site is for the limited storage of agricultural materials which are being relocated elsewhere.

2.4 Aisled Barn forms part of the farmyard located at the former Home Farm.

The barn lies along the southern edge of what is a relatively compact site. It is denoted by a stone wall boundary to the north, south and west. The early 19th century former cart shed / granary is located directly to the east with the former piggery and an adjoining outbuilding is located to the north of the yard.

Fig 3. Downham Estate configuration (Google Map) illustrating existing characteristics and building references.

The existing site access is located to the north boundary of the site. Downham Hall lies to the southwest of Aisled Barn and is accessed from a separate set of gates located to the northeast of the site, in between which is an area of trees and shrubs.

2.5 Internally the barn is divided into seven roof bays with a central aisle and narrow side aisles of approximately 1m wide. The bays are formed from six pairs of oak arcade posts which stand on stacked stone stylobates.

The trusses have light collars and raking queen struts and are largely in oak. The purlins and rafters are now of softwood and the trusses have been repaired with softwood. The upper part of truss no.2 (from the east) has been entirely replaced, as has the western truss. The stylobates appear to be original all except the southwest stylobate which is a 20th century replacement. A mixture of curved and straight braces is used in between the arcade posts and the tie beams and arcade plates. Each end bay has been converted into shippons, with softwood timber stalls and haylofts over some time during the 19th century. The floor to the central bay has a stone flag floor covering and might have served as a threshing floor.

3.0 EXISTING PHOTOGRAPHS

4.0 PROPOSAL

4.1 The proposal which forms the basis of this application seeks to convert the existing barn into commercial office space through a fully conservation led approach, whilst maintaining the character and aesthetic of the historic barn.

The proposal provides a comprehensive approach which will facilitate the positive conversion of the Aisled Barn site providing significant enhancements to the site and wider context. The scheme relates to the conversion of the barn, cart shed and outbuilding as well as alteration to the existing entrance to facilitate safer access of the site.

It will create heritage, economic, environmental and safety enhancements to a site which forms the first visible buildings on the approach to Downham Village.

4.2 Externally the proposal includes:

4.2.1 A new entrance point formed in the boundary wall to facilitate vehicle access to the site as the existing entrance does not meet required highways safety criteria.

4.2.2 The creation of a new access track to the farmyard from Downham Hall's existing driveway, including associated alterations of the existing entrance boundary wall to enable visibility splay standards to be met. The new access track will be set back approximately 32m from the main road to maintain the existing mature tree frontage and root protection areas, as well as screen the new entrance point. The installation of a traditional metal estate fence and gate will denote Downham Hall curtilage.

4.2.3 The conversion of the adjacent outbuilding to house a wood pellet boiler and associated store is proposed. Aside from its environmental benefits this will assist with the sustainable running of the buildings. To include re-roofing works, wall pointing, new solid floor construction and connection to associated buildings for ducting.

4.2.4 Re-purposing of the existing yard to provide car parking and a new gravel surface.

4.25 Utilisation of the area to the south of the main barn, accommodating a new floor mounted solar panel array, to provide a means of renewable energy production. These will be set at ground level to make them almost entirely invisible from Downham Hall and the associated listed buildings.

Fig 4. Proposed site plan illustrating the new access and site layout.

4.2.6 The conversion of the adjacent cart shed to house a bike and bin store at ground level and conference room at first floor.

4.2.7 The external re-pointing works using lime mortar and the installation of cast iron heritage rainwater goods.

4.2.8 Re-roofing works excluding the area above ancillary office accommodation. The repair of existing structure, the installation of conservation rooflights and construction of insulation and internal wall build up, refer to detailed drawings for associated details.

4.2.9 External features such as barn doors to be refurbished, painted in the Estate 'green' (the estate colour) and reinstalled.

4.3 Internally the proposal includes:

4.3.1 The internal refurbishment of the existing barn, including limited sub-division, using glass to facilitate new office use, maintaining original internal character, details and scale to ensure the office space remains subsidiary to and does not compromise the agricultural character and historic features of the building.

4.3.1 The re-roofing works (to areas stated) include the installation of roof insulation and flush fitting conservation rooflights to replace existing glass slates.

4.3.2. The refurbishment of existing windows units to include replacement glazing where required. New aluminium windows and doors where required with double glazing set back into the reveals to reduce visual impact and maintain a sense of depth to the openings.

4.3.3 The installation of internal wall insulation to external walls with lime plastering. Refer to Fig 7 for indicative detail of wall build up.

4.3.4 Amendment to the existing floor to include: removal of existing concrete floors, existing stone flags to be recorded, carefully lifted, cleaned and re-installed, careful removal of earthan floor. Installation throughout of a new limecrete flooring system with underfloor heating, floor finishes as indicated on proposed drawings to replicate and re-use existing finishes.

4.3.5 The recording, removal and reinstallation of the existing timber shippon stalls within new offices design.

4.3.6 The installation of new internal aluminium glazing / screens to form offices. Refer to detailed drawings illustrating the minimal impact and renovation of the space.

Fig 5. Proposed drawings

4.3.7 New internal wall opening for use as doorway and formation of internal walls for ancillary office spaces.

4.3.8 To allow for accessibility to meet DDA requirements including new internal access ramps which will be created between the level changes of the internal barn.

4.3.9 The first floor of the cart shed is to be sensitively refurbished including re-roofing, floor, wall and roof insulation, refurbished existing timber windows for business meetings and periodic Estate led events, such as heritage open days associated with Downham Hall.

4.3.11 Associated localised repairs in line with structural engineers report.

4.3.12 Full mechanical and electrical installation including heating system to be installed including underfloor heating and radiator system with associated ducting to boiler in separate building. New lighting layout throughout.

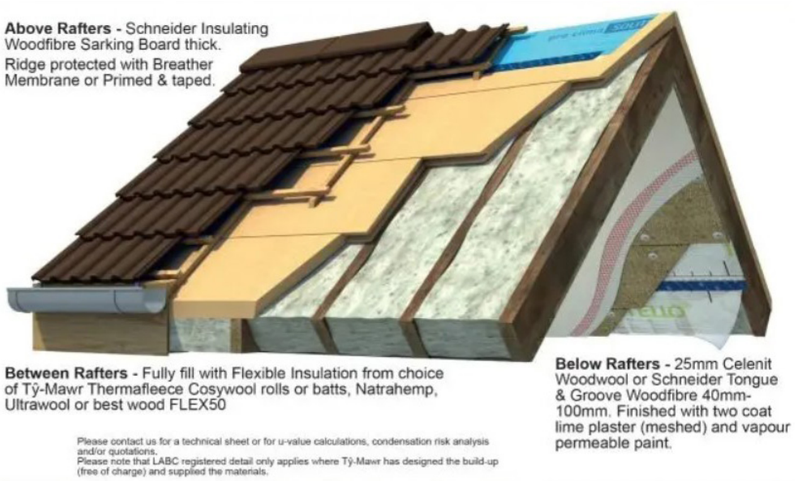


Fig 6. Roof build up sample detail of conservation wood fibre insulation and lime build up to suit listed building structure.

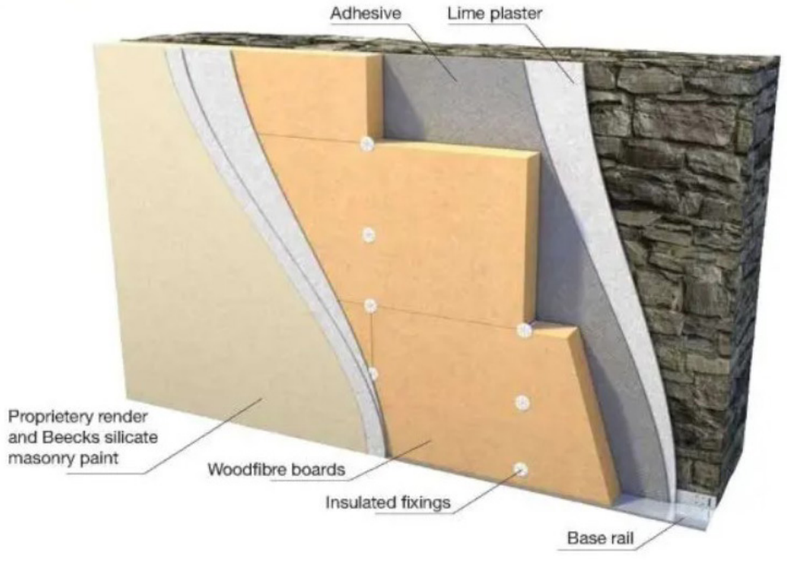


Fig 7. External wall build up sample detail of conservation wood fibre insulation and lime build up to suit listed building structure.

5.0 PRE-APPLICATION

5.1 A pre-planning application submission was made in February 2025 with an associated site visit made 18.06.2025 and a written response issued 17.7.2025.

Planning Ref: RV/2025/00026.

The following sections reviews the pre-application comments and how the proposal addresses any associated items.

5.2 The associated response was provided which agreed that the principle was acceptable and conforms to Policies DMH3 and DMH4.

The below section provides extracts from the response, reviews and responds to items raised within the pre-application response and how the planning submission meets the requirements.

One main amendment of this proposal to the pre-application submission is the omission of the first floor residential unit and therefore associated comments are no longer applicable.

5.3 *'Policy DMH4, the barn building in question lies in close proximity to Downham Hall with an adjoined former piggery & outbuilding and cart shed sited directly adjacent to its North-eastern and South-eastern elevations respectively. As such, the barn building does not read as an isolated feature within the surrounding landscape. The proposed development would therefore satisfy the requirements of criteria point 1 of Policy DMH4 and locational requirements of Policy DMH3.'*

5.4 *'it is understood that the agricultural use of the barn building ceased some time ago therefore it is not anticipated that the proposed reuse of the barn would be of detriment to the Borough's rural economy. Accordingly, the proposal would broadly satisfy the requirements of criteria points 3, 4 and 5 of Policy DMH4 and design requirements of Policy DMH3.'*

5.5 *'Aisled Barn and the adjacent cart shed lie approximately 40 metres away from Downham Hall which is the site's closest residential receptor. Analysis shows that there would be no direct interface between windows within the converted barn and cart shed and Downham Hall therefore the proposal raises no concerns with respect to impacts upon privacy. In addition, whilst full operational details pertaining to the proposed office use have not been provided, it is not anticipated that use of the buildings as an office and associated conference room would give rise to noise and disturbances that would unduly impact upon the amenity of the occupants residing at Downham Hall. Furthermore, no additional residential receptors lie within close proximity to the proposal site. Consequently, it is not anticipated that the proposed development would be harmful to the amenity of any neighbouring residents.'*

'a Historic Buildings Appraisal has been provided in support of the application which comprehensively documents the agricultural origins of the barn and surrounding site therefore it is clear that the barn and adjacent cart shed benefit from a genuine history of use for agriculture. The proposal would therefore satisfy the requirements of criteria point 2.'

5.6 *'no structural survey work has been provided in support of this enquiry therefore this information would need to be provided as part of a formal planning application submission to demonstrate the barn and cart shed's suitability for accommodating the proposal in order to satisfy the requirements of criteria point 3.'*

A supporting structural survey by Blackett-Ord Conservation Engineering confirms suitability for conversion.

5.7 *'no extensions or significant alterations are proposed to the barn building or cart shed as part of their conversion to offices and as conveyed above the office use proposed is considered to be compatible with its immediate surroundings. As such, it is not considered that the proposal would harm the appearance or function of the area in which it is situated and would therefore satisfy criteria point 4.'*

5.8 *'the LPA is unable to offer comments with respect to access and general highway safety therefore compliance with criteria point 5 would need to be established through consultation with the Local Highways Authority.'*

A full supporting transport statement is provided as part of the submission by I-Transport.

5.9 *'the submitted plans indicate that the proposed office conversion would make use of the barn building and cart shed's existing door, window and roof light openings which would be respectful to the existence sequence of openings within these buildings. Aluminium doors and windows are proposed for some of the barn's North-eastern openings however given the historic character of the building it is considered that the use of timber doors and windows would be more appropriate. Notwithstanding this minor issue, it is considered that the proposal would otherwise be of a high standard and in keeping with the traditional character of the barn and cart shed. The proposal would therefore broadly satisfy the requirements of criteria point 6.'*

The proposal retains the same design as submitted and materiality which is suitable for the development and used in other local conversions. The integration of this detailing offers a contrasting material which demonstrates a modern installation and new detail against the traditional detailing of the existing. The existing timber windows will be repaired and painted with internal aluminium secondary glazing.

5.10 '*ecological survey work has been submitted in support of the application which confirms the presence of protected species within Aisled Barn however the survey work undertaken appears to be limited to the barn building (the adjacent cart shed does not appear to have been surveyed) and this survey work provides no details with respect to use of the outbuilding adjoining the former piggery as a designated bat roost as proposed. As such, updated ecological survey work would need to be provided in support of a formal planning application submission in order to fully satisfy the requirements of criteria point 7.'*

A full supporting ecological report is provided as part of the submission by Knight Sky Ecology.

5.11 '*Sequential test*
The proposed development seeks to convert Aisled Barn and the adjacent cart shed into an office building and associated conference room respectively. The National Planning Policy Framework identifies offices as a 'Main town centre use'. In this instance, the proposal site is located approximately 4 kilometres outside of the town centre boundary of Clitheroe (and approximately 2.5 kilometres from Clitheroe's defined settlement area) and as such falls within the realm of an out-of-town site which are defined in the NPPF as locations out of the town centre that are sited outside the existing urban area... the Council is unable to provide a definitive view as to whether or not the proposed development would fall within the realm of a small scale rural office use and be exempt from having to satisfy the sequential test.'

The occupant for the office unit will be Ingham and Yorke who are currently located at Brookside Barn, Downham. They have been active participants in shaping the Estate over the decades and have been intimately involved in the proposals for the conversion of Aisled Barn, drawing upon their professional experience of the historic built environment in conjunction with their specific requirements for the building.

The firm consists of a total of 13 staff members with the proposal specifically illustrating the small scale nature of the office personnel. The services provided are mainly site based and will not involve significant visits from associated clients.

This scheme represents an important and tailored opportunity to provide an office space to suit this local firm, who's business is a rurally based. A town centre location is not suitable for the firm.

It should be noted that there are other more significant sized office developments located in the borough which are rurally based such as Manor Court, Ribchester, Grindleton Office and Mitton Business Park.

Based on the information provided and the small scale nature of the application, it is concluded that a Sequential Test is not required to be provided.

5.12 *'Other works associated with the conversion include re-roofing, insulation to the roof space and walls, and installation of underfloor heating. The re-roofing will result in the loss of historic torching to the underside of the hayloft, which is regrettable. If there is a way of retaining this in-situ then this would be beneficial. The installation of insulation will have a physical and visual impact on the roof of the hayloft, which is considered unavoidable but would result in harm through loss of appreciation of the roof covering/torching. The insulation to the roof to the aisled barn resulting in obscuration of the stone slates would also be harmful (low less than substantial).'*

The works are conservation lead with associated materials and details to support this as described and detailed accordingly to ensure a low level of harm.

5.13 *Of more concern is the proposed underfloor heating. This would involve lifting and relaying the threshing floor, which is not only well preserved but notably of a high quality, with narrow joints between the flags...As such there are concerns that lifting and relaying these flags will result in potential damage. It is also unclear as to whether the floor either side of the threshing floor is earthen floor. The flags on top of the earth floor, while possibly later, indicate this is historic. This should be investigated and confirmed preferably with archaeological input. As suggested on site a floating floor would be preferable.*

The consideration of alternative heating sources to underfloor heating is recommended which would enable heating only to areas necessary for use. Historic England's guidance on heating of places of worship advises underfloor heating is inappropriate for intermittent heating. Given its proposed use where it will likely not be in use overnight and at weekends, it remains doubtful as to whether underfloor heating is the best heating option. There is also the potential for damage to the floor should any maintenance be required and it reaches the end of its serviceable life.

The comments above have been fully considered and further reviewed on site with the earthen floor exposed and annotated in Figure 7. Given the intended heating source of a wood pellet boiler and nature of the double height space, it is anticipated that the space will require both under floor heating (UFH) and radiators. The UFH aspect is an important aspect to reduce the size and visual impact of the radiators as well as being more economical and efficient to maintain heat through the building. Radiators are included within the design scheme as associated heating loss review / calculation is required and they may be required to further support the heating of the buildings.

The retention of the floors, is not viable given the associated negative impact it would have on the design scheme, aesthetic and fabric of the building. Figure 7 illustrates a sketch impact on the floor levels should the existing floors be retained. The sketch is based on a construction build up of approximately 400mm to provide adequate construction and ventilation of the void as per the detail. This would involve the formation of two central sleeper walls to support the suspended floor as well as fixings into the barn external walls which would cause removal of the historic fabric. Above all, the usability of the building would be significantly impacted by these work.

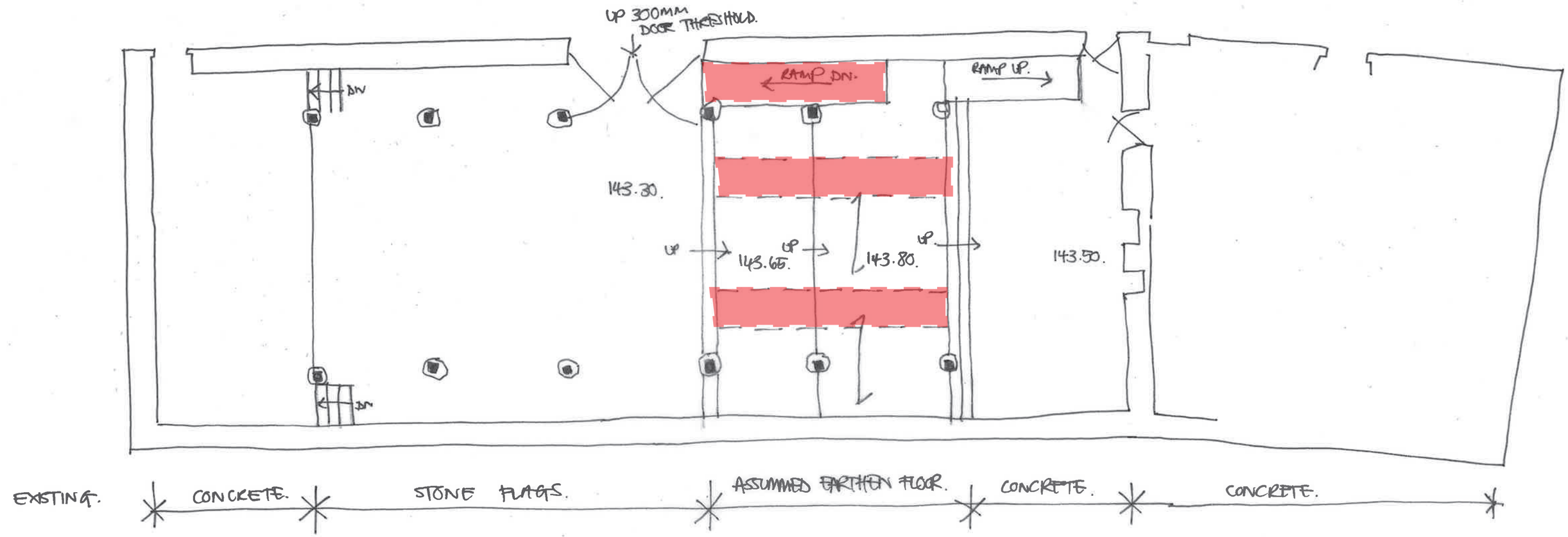
The impact on the floor levels, based on retaining the highest level would create a series of internal steps to the proposal and issues with construction. It would create a visual detraction of the space by introducing numerous split levels, prohibiting the ability of creating a single level to meet DDA accessible requirements. Additionally, this would create a negative impact on the existing openings where the cills would have to be amended which would have a deleterious impact on the historical aesthetic.

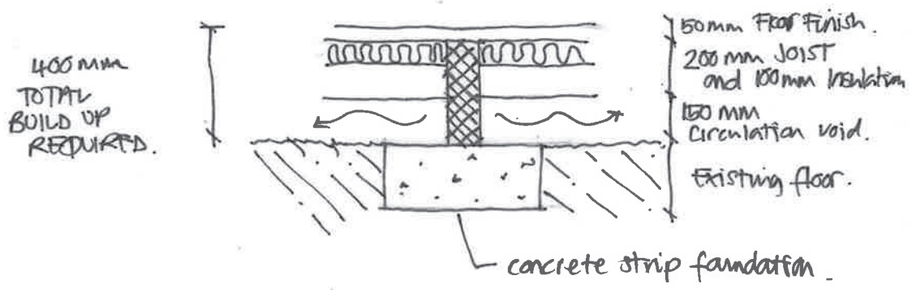
Taking all this into account, it is instead proposed that the solution is to remove the existing floor coverings in order for a construction detail to provide associated insulation and thermal performance, installation of UFH and retention of existing building features such as door heights. The proposed floor finishes will equally replicate the associated areas through use of polished concrete, timber and re-laying of stone flags which is demonstrated on the proposed floor plans.

The proposed mitigation is to record stone flags for re-use and archaeological watching brief as required throughout the works relating to the floor construction.

5.14 *The insulation to the walls will result in the covering of the well-preserved, original C17 mortar. It is likely that historically the walls would have received a protective lime putty surface treatment and lime wash and so providing this is retained there would be no harm caused by insulation with lime, subject to full details. Timber doors would be installed to the granary which is currently open at the ground floor level. The retention of the open ground floor level would be preferable as this allows for appreciation of its intended historic use however it is accepted that some form of protection / sound proofing may be required following installation of the biomass boiler. The installation of the biomass should be considered against Paragraph 167 of the NPPF. Other works such as removal of concrete flooring and repointing is considered beneficial.*

Fig 8. Existing floor retention review.





Proposed sleeper wall detail.

The biomass boiler will now be located to the adjacent separate outbuilding with conservation led construction detailing to walls and ceilings as established.

5.15 *The slight alteration to the wall including staggered lowering for improved visibility will have a negligible impact on significance. The gates will remain in situ and the proposed alterations appear sensitively designed. Providing the opening to the wall surrounding the farmstead is completed with appropriate agricultural gateposts or finished in a way that reflects the more functional agricultural character of the farmstead, the harm caused to the wall would be very low.*

The design and detail issued at pre-application stage is reflected in this proposal.

5.16 *'The proposed installation of ground mounted solar panels to the rear of the barn, whilst causing minimal harm to the courtyard farmstead, would impact on the setting of Downham Hall and the Church Of St. Leonard...Whilst the solar array could be screened partially by planting, there is likely to be some remaining visibility and this would read as a large-scale intrusive addition to the hall and church, causing less than substantial harm.'*

The solar panels are located at ground level on a freestanding ballasted PV mounting system. They will not be visible from the Church and minimally visible from some aspects of the first floor of Downham Hall due to the design of the setting at low level behind an existing stone wall and associated landscaping.

This is a key aspect to the project to provide renewable energy and address climate concerns. The alternative would be roof mounted panels, which would have a significantly greater visual impact on the site and surrounding area.

5.17 *The aisled barn is exceptionally well-preserved and overall it is considered that the scheme responds sensitively to its special character. Whilst there is some less than substantial harm caused by the proposal, it is likely any reuse scheme that involves direct physical works will result in similar or more harm... The proposed use enables the open character of the barn and its C17 trusses to remain intact, and would enable continued appreciation of this significant space. The proposal carries several significant heritage benefits including active use, increased maintenance, and repair.*

The less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public heritage benefits in accordance with Paragraph 215 of the NPPF.

5.18 As illustrated from the response, associated amendments and review, the proposed scheme is fully considered to reduce harm to the listed building and surrounding area.

The benefits of the scheme are significant for the building and wider area as well as providing the building with an amended purpose and opportunity to be preserved for decades to come.

6.0 ACCESS

6.1 As previously illustrated, there is a new proposed access to the farmyard from the existing hall access drive.

Following a highway consultant design review of the existing yard access, the associated impact of required alterations would be excessive on the character and landscaping of the entrance area, therefore the scheme proposes to utilise Downham Hall's existing access drive.

This will involve the alteration of the existing entrance boundary wall which will be sensitively lowered to enhance visibility splays to meet LCC requirements. Refer to proposed drawing 6838-P06 for associated design alterations.

The new access track will be set back approximately 32m from the main road in order to maintain the existing mature tree frontage and adhere to the root protection areas, as well as screen the entrance driveway to the yard. A traditional estate metal fence and gates at the junction of the drive and access track will denote Downham Hall's curtilage.

Adequate parking for the proposal and tenant will be provided to suit the gravel and cobbled farmyard.

Pedestrian access will also follow the proposed new access with a secure cycle store provided in the adjacent outbuilding to further parking numbers.

7.0 LANDSCAPING

7.1 The simplistic hard and soft landscaping will provide a critical role in finalising the external areas, defining the access areas and external social spaces. The existing agricultural nature of the space will be continued through softer and landscaped materials such as gravel opposed to tarmac hardstanding. Existing boundary walls will be retained to enclose the site with some planted areas to the south to soften the area and solar panels. A paved area to the front will form a defined seating space for the tenant.

8.0 STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

8.1 A structural visual inspection is being progressed by a conservation engineer and will be integrated to the design and detailed planning submission.

9.0 BAT AND BIRD REPORT

9.1 A full preliminary assessment and dusk emergence survey has been progressed with associated discussions carried out regarding requirements and submitted as part of this application.

10.0 FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT

10.1 As illustrated in Figure 9, the proposed site and associated buildings are outside any flood risk zones including surface water. As a result it is deemed no further information is required.

Fig 9. Flood risk assessment map with site highlighted in red.

Surface water assessment map with site highlighted in red not located in any flood risk area.

10.0 CONCLUSION

10.1 The proposal that forms the basis of this application will bring an enhanced vibrancy and use to a historical and a significant and historical building complex. The proposals are entirely conservation led to ensure the scheme will restore and preserve the buildings for decades to come.

Through the analysis and issues covered in this report, as well as the additional supporting information submitted, this development will provide a positive contribution to the Downham Estate and the wider Ribble Valley Borough.

The proposal will provide a positive and continued opportunity for public, economic and building heritage restoration benefits to the local area by rejuvenating the largely redundant buildings. Bespoke offices will be provided for a known and established local employer and key stakeholder in the management of the Downham Estate, its properties and landscape assets.

It will provide economic investment which will result in the continued long-term and appropriate employment and specialist land management skills which have been central to the evolution of the Downham Estate for generations.

Fig 10. Internal sketch visualisation

PROPOSED CONVERSION AT AISLED BARN, DOWNHAM

PRE-PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT

SUNDERLAND PEACOCK ARCHITECTS