

Graham Askew MRICS, Chartered Building Surveyor

STRUCTURAL APPRAISAL

OF

FORMER FARM BUILDINGS

AT

SUSSEX PRAIRIE GARDEN

MORLANDS FARM

WHEATSHEAF ROAD

HENFIELD

WEST SUSSEX

BN5 9AT

11th February 2026

Addendum added 14th September 2026

Sussex Prairie Garden, Morlands Farm, Henfield.

SITE ADDRESS:

Morlands Farm

Wheatsheaf Road

Henfield

West Sussex

CARRIED OUT ON BEHALF OF:

Mr & Mrs P McBride

DATE OF INSPECTION:

4th February 2026

WEATHER CONDITIONS:

Cloudy with sunny spells. Very wet under foot.

PERSONS PRESENT:

Mr G Askew MRICS

Chartered Building Surveyor

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Following your instruction, I attended Morlands Farm, Henfield, on Wednesday, 4th February 2026, with the sole purpose of undertaking a structural appraisal of the former farm building, sited adjacent to a converted Dutch barn, at the rear of Morlands Farmhouse.

The following report is for the private and confidential use of the Clients, Mr & Mrs McBride, for whom the structural appraisal has been prepared. Whilst this report may be shown to other professional advisors, acting for Mr & Mrs McBride, the contents are not to be discussed with nor made use of in part or full by any third party without the express written authority of Mr G Askew MRICS. Without such consent I accept no responsibility to any third party.

This survey consists of a structural appraisal of the relevant main, structural building fabric, to be considered for conversion. No account has been made of the cosmetic finishes, decorations, services, etc. found on site and no tests were carried out on any of the services. Any parts of the building that were covered or unexposed at the time of this survey have not been commented upon; I am therefore unable to guarantee any such parts are free from defect.

1.0 SITE & GENERAL

The site is located within Horsham District and in the parish of Woodmancote, close to the village of Henfield. The farm building currently has an agricultural use, with an ancillary café and meeting room. These areas are being used by Mr & Mrs McBride's business, known as the Sussex Prairie Garden.

The detached, single storey building was probably constructed around 1910. It enjoys a footprint of approximately 468 sq.m. The main core of this building, to the rear, east side, is predominantly formed in timber frame and has a shallow pitched roof, covered with corrugated sheets. The main core of the building has a roof ridge which runs north to south. This part of the building is currently being used as a store and work-shop area for the Sussex Prairie Garden.

There is an existing, attached lean-to addition on the front, west side of the building, with a mono-pitch roof over. This was probably an open area in 1910, but it has gradually been enclosed, over the years.

The rear, east side of the building affords an access road, which runs parallel to the property. Space for parking is available in front of the east elevation.

Mr and Mrs McBride reside in the adjacent, converted Dutch barn, with open ground and patio areas seen on the north, south and west elevations.

2.0 BUILDING

2.1 Roofs

2.1.1 Original, Core Building

The ridge is continuous, running north to south through the unit. This roof is clad with corrugated fibre-cement boarding, held on a series of timber trusses. Where visible, the roof sheeting appears to be in fairly good condition, for its age; although, it has been replaced/maintained, in stages, over the years.

The existing, west facing corrugated sheeting has been covered with corrugated metal Onduline sheets. The existing corrugated sheeting is seen on the rear east elevation only. At the time of my inspection this roof showed little or no sign of damp or moisture ingress.

An area of photovoltaic solar panels is seen at the north-west end of the roof, predominantly covering the west facing roof rake.

The main, original roof has a series of softwood timber roof trusses, placed at approximately 1.8m centres. These trusses are supported by timber-frame walling below. Rafters and bottom cord ceiling joists have been formed using minimum 125 x 50mm softwood timbers, with a series of struts and ties on the east and west elevations. This is an early form of truss, which is typical for the era of the building's construction. These trusses bear onto the original wall-plate, approximately 150 x 100mm in section, as well as a timber studwork wall frame.

Selected timber roof repairs have been undertaken over the years, thus maintaining the integrity of the timber fabric. It is noted that some of the original wall-plates are a little old and gnarled, but are aided by support from the main studwork frame below.

A number of translucent, corrugated upvc roof panels have been fitted in the roof slope, providing additional light into the building.

At the south end of the building, the floor slab to ridge level measures just under 5000mm. The floor slab to eaves measures 3030mm.

2.1.2 Café / Meeting Room Lean-To Roof

This lean-to roof has gradually been refurbished over the years. The roof construction is somewhat unorthodox at the north end of this roof, incorporating 100 x 50mm rafters and a 175 x 50mm bottom truss cord. Corrugated Onduline sheets have been placed across the outside of this roof, being secured on a series of 100 x 40mm timber slats, placed at 350mm centres. This north end appears to provide a watertight roof covering.

On the west elevation the trusses are supported by an external, timber framework wall. Inside the barn the trusses are cantilevered across to the original barn wall (now an internal wall), again formed in 100 x 50mm softwood framework, with an intermediate beam support consisting of 2 No. 200 x 50mm timbers. These timbers act as a beam, breaking the span of the intermediate trusses seen aiding the support of the roof. The trusses are placed at 3500mm intervals.

Along the internal, north to south length, the trusses' beam support is aided by a number of timber posts. Such posts are also seen on the outside line of the café wall.

The south-west corner of the lean-to roof appears to have been renewed, some 15 years ago. The south-west end roof has been formed with 200 x 50mm softwood rafters at 400mm centres, all covered with the corrugated Onduline roof sheets. Rafters bear on the existing, internal, farm barn studwork wall and the upgraded/repared, external, meeting room studwork wall.

There is a 'kick' in the length of west elevation wall of approximately 750mm, where the café and WC areas protrude farther out to the west than the meeting room. As a result, the meeting room has a large roof over-hang.

The main farm building roof and lean-to roof both enjoy good sized rainwater goods. These are 150mm diameter, half round gutters and 100mm diameter down-pipes, discharging to existing, recognised outlets. A lot of the rainwater discharges to troughs, rainwater butts, etc. and is then used in the garden during the drier months.

2.2 **External Walls**

2.2.1 **Original, Core Building**

Gable ends are seen on the north and south elevations. The east elevation has open eaves. The west elevation eaves are also open, forming part of the lean-to roof over the café and meeting room.

The main external walls, supporting the roof trusses, etc., are formed using 100 x 50mm, vertical softwood timbers, at 550mm intervals, nogged into minimum 4 No. sections through their storey height. This framework has been regularly maintained over the years and is currently in a good condition, providing lattice support to the roof structure. Feather-edge boarding is found on all internal and external elevations.

It is noted that some of the trusses do not align with individual, vertical timber studs. In selected areas larger section posts have been placed, presumably when the original barn was divided into animal pens, feeding bays, etc.

Much of the stud framework appears to be in good condition; however, it is noted that the east elevation wall is out of plumb. I am of the opinion that this movement is historical and it does not appear to affect the wall's structural stability. It is noted that the positioning of vertical studs in the framework acts as a load-sharing wall, to aid support of the main roof trusses.

The lower portion of the timber frame wall sees 225mm, solid concrete block stall risers, at ground level, below the timber-frame wall sole-plate.

2.2.2 **Café / Meeting Room / Toilets**

I am of the opinion that almost the entire west elevation may have been open originally, but has subsequently been enclosed to suit various uses over the years. Maintenance work / repairs have been carried out regularly over the last 50 years, or so.

All café and meeting room walls are formed using 100 x 50mm softwood studwork, at 400mm centres. These walls are all clad externally with feather-edged boarding. In places, this boarding has been placed internally as well, providing a limited amount of additional racking / stability. It is noted that these lean-to walls are plumb and upright.

The north-west corner, at the café end of the building, sees a series of roof trusses which are supported by 250 x 75mm timber posts, at 3500mm centres. These coincide with other posts, within the building. The posts look to be in fair condition; although, internally, one post has a traditional splice. Although adequate this post would benefit from having strapping applied, to ensure that no movement occurs in the future.

The meeting room walls have been lined internally with pine boarding. They appear to be more recent than those forming the café and toilet area.

Ground levels fall from east to west; therefore, lower stall risers are more visible on the west elevation. These are part concrete block and part brick stall risers, from the lower ground level up to floor level.

2.3 **Internal Partitions**

The internal partitions are very much as seen. More permanent, timber framing and cladding partitions have been formed at the café / toilet end of the building.

One timber-framed and timber-clad partition can be seen running east to west through the meeting room. This partition is not quite a full storey height.

Partitions in the original core building are limited to the existing studwork partitions, used to form cattle pens, feeding pens, etc. A pedestrian width access is found through the building. In all cases these partitions look to be non load-bearing and do not specifically aid support of the main core structure.

2.4 **Ground Floor Slab, Etc.**

2.4.1 **Original, Core Building**

This is part of the original farm building and has at least two small, maximum 100mm, concrete steps within. It is noted that the concrete in this part of the building is very patchy and does not afford protection against rising damp.

Cattle pens and trough locations have been concreted flush with the main floor concrete; however, scants and falls are still visible.

The concrete is in tact, albeit cracked and crazed. No construction joints have been incorporated, which has resulted in the minor movement seen in the floor.

2.4.2 **Café / Meeting Room**

Floors in these areas are a more recent addition. The concrete was cast when the building was enclosed, at least 15 to 20 years ago. Concrete in the meeting room has a strong, ribbed consistency. Damp meter readings taken in this area were satisfactory.

The concrete floor, at the north end of the building, where the toilets exist, could not be inspected at the time of my visit. It is noted that cracks are seen at this north end of the building, as no construction / movement joints were incorporated when the concrete slab was refurbished.

2.4.3 **General**

Regular repairs and refurbishment, over the years, have maintained the integrity of the floor slabs, throughout the building.

2.5 **Foundations**

Foundations, to the original core building, had been exposed ready for inspection. These excavations confirmed foundations down to a depth of minimum 650mm. Although the concrete spread was very limited, solid concrete was found to have been used, in excess of 300mm thick, in total. No movement is seen around this older part of the building. It is therefore assumed that the foundations are suitable for the building and any proposed alterations.

A further trial hole had been excavated on the west side of the lean-to part of the building, where refurbishment / remedial works have been carried out over the years. The top of the foundation was found to be 700mm deep, below the existing ground floor, with a concrete spread in the region of minimum 150mm. This thickness of the concrete foundation extended down almost 900mm, at the time of my inspection. No further excavation was carried out and it was assumed that a good, traditional strip foundation had been placed along the external, west wall to aid support of the structure. Again, this foundation would appear to be more than adequate for its present and future use.

2.6 **Joinery & Fenestrations**

2.6.1 **Original, Core Building**

Outside of the corrugated sheeting and its clear/translucent rooflights, fenestrations are limited to the following :-

Both north and south end gables enjoy a pair of farm-style, vertical boarded softwood gates. The pair of gates at the south end of the building will require some repair to ensure they provide adequate security.

Typical, vertical boarded pedestrian pass doors are found adjacent to both of the above pairs of gates. These appear to be in good order for their age.

Due to the 3000mm floor to eaves height, the longer east and west elevations see high level, 550 x 700mm deep, single glazed, fixed, timber windows. This allows light to enter the east side of the building, from the driveway. The west elevation windows are superfluous due to the presence of the lean-to building farther to the west.

2.6.2 **Café / Meeting Room**

I am of the opinion that this area was originally open. Where it has been infilled a small number of windows are seen on the main, west elevation, together with 6 No. pairs of French doors. These all appear to be fairly new, secure and in good working order. All fenestration glazing is double glazed, with a 6mm hermetically sealed air gap between the panes.

2.6.3 **Other joinery**

Pedestrian doorways provide access to the toilet area, at the north end of the building. These doors all look to be adequate for their use.

External joinery is limited to the west elevation exit doors, at the south end of the building. A ramp has been formed with a sturdy, platform, suitable for disabled person access. A hand-rail and balustrades have been provided. Note: Gaps between the balustrades are no greater than 100mm, as required. There is no lower level hand-rail for wheelchairs users. The platform is supported by a series of concrete held, 100 x 100mm softwood posts.

2.7 **Services**

A full inspection of the services was not undertaken; however, it is noted that electricity is available in the building.

PV solar roof panels are seen on the west facing roof slope, over the original, core building. The electricity produced will be stored in a series of on-site batteries.

A mains fed water supply is provided in the café. Individual, less than 5kW wood-burners serve the café / meeting room area.

Foul water drainage is located towards the north of the main building, discharging to an existing, small sewage treatment plant. This treatment plant is also used by the residential Dutch barn to the north of the site.

3.0 **SUMMARY & CONCLUSION**

I understand that Mr & Mrs McBride aim to seek permission to convert this building into domestic accommodation. Structurally, I found the unit to be in very good condition, despite its age, and suitable for conversion.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are to be read in conjunction with the attached structural appraisal, in the knowledge that part of this building is to be converted into residential accommodation.

The items listed below have not been written in any order of priority, but should be considered in order to provide a secure, dry, insulated and water-proof property. The writer may be contacted if there are any queries.

1. The external roof and wall cladding could be removed, leaving the existing structure in place. Lateral restraint could be applied to the external walls/roof, particularly those on the north elevation. The roof could be nogged further to take a new, lightweight, Client chosen, roof covering.
2. Insulation should be up-graded to meet current Building Regulation requirements. This work can be undertaken from inside the unit, thus not disturbing the external envelope of the building. SAP ratings and an EPC are required as part of the Building Regulation criteria.
3. Walls would benefit from being racked with plywood, to aid the load-sharing abilities of the studwork. Any new internal / external finishes are to be Client chosen.
4. The existing concrete floor, in the lean-to area, is robust. Elsewhere, in the main core building, the floor slab appears to have been 'topped up' over the years. The concrete could be smoothed over and packed to improve the thermal values, particularly as there is ample headroom in this large area.
5. Fenestrations currently ensure that the building is watertight; however, these are not very efficient. It is suggested that they are therefore replaced, thus ensuring the correct U values are achieved.
6. Surface and foul water drains are to be checked on site to ensure their final out-fall is clear flowing. Additional rainwater storage facilities would be beneficial. A rainwater harvesting unit or plant that recycles grey water, could be considered.

Please contact me should you require any further advice.

Graham Askew MRICS.
12th February 2026

ADDENDUM TO ORIGINAL STRUCTURAL APPRAISAL

5.0 Introduction.

I re-visited site on the 9th September 2026 to look at the building with the Clients, Mr & Mrs McBride. The purpose of this visit was to check the existing roof construction.

6.0 Conclusion

A lot of the original, corrugated, galvanised metal sheeting has been left in place, particularly on the rear elevation; however, much of the roof has been covered with a new, corrugated, Onduline fibre sheeting. This new roof sheeting looks to be continuous and watertight in all locations.

The Onduline sheeting is a black bitumen roof sheeting. It is very common for such sheeting to be used on out-buildings, garden buildings, work-shops, domestic garages, etc. The sheets are made from highly durable, bitumen infused fibres, consisting of approximately 50% recycled materials, providing a wind, rain, snow resistant product.

The sheets are flexible, durable and rust free. No asbestos or toxic chemicals are used to make these Onduline sheets.

Graham Askew MRICS.

14th September 2026