Method Statement

Protection of Historic Smoke-Blackened Roof Timbers

Property: The Old Cottage, Pearson Road, Sonning, RG4 6UH

Application reference: 261787

Date: 27 October 2026

1. Purpose and scope

This method statement sets out the measures to protect the historic smoke-blackened rafters, wind braces and scissor truss during the proposed ceiling beam repair and associated preparatory works.

These roof timbers relate to the building's former open-hall arrangement. The ceiling is a later insertion and is distinct from the smoke-blackened fabric protected by this statement.

Protection will prevent accidental impact, abrasion, contamination and loss of historic surface material during access, removal or relocation of the water tank, lifting of boarding and insulation, installation of repair components and removal of waste.

The protective measures will be implemented before the preparatory operations they safeguard and maintained throughout the relevant works.

This statement does not authorise alterations to historic fabric beyond the approved repair details.

2. Contractor responsibility

The nominated site supervisor will be responsible for installing, checking, maintaining and removing the protection and temporary access arrangements.

All operatives will be briefed on:

- The location and significance of the smoke-blackened timbers.
- The designated access route and crossing over the scissor truss.
- The prohibition on stepping on, gripping or resting materials against the protected timbers.
- Controlled handling of tools and materials.
- The requirement to stop if protection becomes ineffective or historic fabric is at risk.

This statement will be available on site.

3. Protection of smoke-blackened surfaces

Rigid, smooth-faced plywood screens on timber frames will be positioned between vulnerable historic surfaces and the access or working areas, particularly:

- At restricted clearances around the attic hatch.
- Beside low rafters and projecting wind braces.
- At the crossing over the scissor truss.
- Beside the water tank and material-handling route.
- Adjacent to repair working positions.

Screens will be sized to pass through the existing hatch and installed without contact with historic surfaces.

They will be securely supported, sufficiently rigid to resist incidental contact and positioned with a clear gap from the protected timbers. The gap will accommodate foreseeable movement or deflection without allowing the screens to touch the historic surfaces.

Screen supports will be suitable for their intended loads. They will not bear on plaster, laths, loose insulation or inadequately supported boarding.

No protection fixings will be attached to the smoke-blackened timbers. No blankets, foam, polythene or other coverings will be wrapped around or laid directly against their surfaces.

4. Access over the scissor truss

A designated crossing will be provided to allow operatives to pass over the obstructing braces without stepping on, gripping or rubbing against the scissor truss.

The crossing will comprise a securely supported temporary platform with suitable approach steps and an independent handhold where necessary. It will not bear on or be fixed to the scissor truss or other protected roof timbers.

The contractor will check that:

- The supporting structure is suitable for the intended loads.
- The platform is secured against sliding, rocking or overturning.
- The walking surface provides secure footing.
- There is sufficient headroom and clearance for controlled passage.
- The platform remains clear of the historic timbers when occupied.
- Any necessary edge protection is provided.
- Adjacent protective screens prevent accidental contact with the braces.

Loose boards laid directly across the braces, with or without padding, will not be used.

Only one operative will cross at a time. Tools and awkward materials will be transferred separately so that operatives can keep their hands available for balance.

If suitable supports or adequate clearance cannot be established, the crossing will not be used and the affected work will not proceed until a workable alternative has been agreed with the local planning authority.

5. Installation sequence

Protection and access components will be introduced through the existing attic hatch in manageable sections.

The contractor will:

1. Protect vulnerable timbers around the hatch.
2. Establish the protected route towards the scissor truss.
3. Assemble the crossing from an already safe access position, without climbing on or gripping the historic braces.
4. Establish protection beyond the crossing and around the tank and repair area.
5. Check the stability and clearances of the completed arrangements before preparatory works begin.

No operative will cross the scissor truss to install supports before a safe means of passage is available.

If installing the protection or crossing requires preparatory removal restricted by the consent, that removal will not proceed until the sequence has been resolved with the local planning authority.

6. Working practices and material handling

Access will be through the existing attic hatch, without enlargement.

Smoke-blackened timbers will not be used as handholds, footholds, lifting points or supports for tools and materials.

The working area will be adequately lit. Tools, cables and waste will be kept clear of the crossing and protected surfaces.

Boarding and insulation: Boarding will be lifted in manageable sections rather than dragged. Insulation will be placed directly into bags or containers, without pulling it across historic surfaces or piling it against roof timbers.

Water tank: The tank will be isolated, drained and disconnected before movement. Residual water will be contained. Its dimensions and handling route will be checked before movement, including clearance past the scissor truss. It will not be dragged, pivoted or rested against protected timbers.

Repair components: Long or awkward components will be guided by sufficient operatives from secure positions. Sharp ends and corners will be covered during handling. Components will not be forced through restricted openings or rested on historic braces.

Any loads placed on the crossing will remain within its intended capacity. If an item cannot pass safely, movement will stop; historic fabric will not be altered to create clearance.

7. Protection during repairs

Protection will remain effective throughout the works.

Where an expressly approved connection requires access to a protected timber, only the necessary section of screen will be adjusted. Unrelated material movements will cease, adjacent surfaces will remain protected and the screen will be reinstated immediately afterwards.

Where protection must be repositioned for access or handling, the affected operation will pause until equivalent protection is established.

Dust and debris will be controlled at source. Smoke-blackened surfaces will not be brushed, vacuumed, sanded, scraped, washed, chemically cleaned, coated or treated.

8. Checks and stop-work procedure

The site supervisor will visually check the protection and crossing before each working shift, after significant material movements and after any adjustment or suspected impact.

Work in the affected area will stop if:

- Protection or the crossing becomes unstable or touches historic fabric.
- Safe footing or clearance cannot be maintained.
- A historic timber is struck or abraded.
- Smoke-blackened material becomes detached.
- Unexpected timber movement or deterioration is observed.
- An operation would exceed the approved scope.

The contractor will make the area safe and inform the owner. Detached historic material will be retained. No cleaning, concealment or remedial treatment will be attempted.

Where no damage has occurred, work may resume once effective protection and safe access have been restored. Where damage has occurred or the approved method needs changing, the owner will notify the local planning authority and obtain any necessary agreement before the affected work resumes.

9. Removal of protection

Protection and the crossing will remain until the operations they safeguard are complete and tools, surplus materials and waste have been removed.

Dismantling will proceed towards the hatch, maintaining safe access and protection for the remaining removal operations. No operative will be left beyond the scissor truss after the crossing is dismantled.

Components will be lifted clear rather than dragged past historic surfaces.

The contractor will visually check the exposed timbers and inform the owner of any apparent damage. Smoke-blackened surfaces will not be cleaned during site clearance.