

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Conservation & Design Team Officer	Michael Atkinson-Smith
Date	29.04.25
Application Reference	25/00084/FUL
Address	143 Syke Road, Rochdale, OL12 9TE
Proposal	Conversion of existing garage to create one self-contained flat including alteration to roof and fenestration

Designated Heritage Assets Affected	Y	144, 145, 146, 147, 148 Syke Road – Grade II 149 and 150 Syke Road – Grade II 151 and 152 Syke Road – Grade II 153 – 154 Syke Road – Grade II
Non-Designated Heritage Assets Affected	N	

Consultation Summary

Subdivision and external alterations need not necessarily be unacceptable from a historic environment conservation perspective subject to appropriate design, materials and construction detailing. However, the adequate serving and functionality of both residential units would need to be clearly demonstrated, or alternative options investigated.

Assessment

The application is supported by a detailed Heritage Statement by a recognised IHBC accredited architectural firm, with there being no good reason to disagree with its general findings.

Development in Syke was historically focussed around the Cronkeyshaw Common and the packhorse trail. There are many examples of well-preserved weavers' cottages, as well as former agricultural buildings. The surviving buildings and spaces highlight the area's industrial and agricultural origins.

The application site lies immediately to the south of a row of Grade II listed former weaver's cottages that appear to have been constructed at the turn of the C19th. OS map data shows that Nos. 141-143 Syke Road were erected between 1851 and 1891, with the garage and side extension to No. 143 currently intended conversion being later additions.

The application site lies to the south of the group of cottages referred to as 'Polly Green', which are variously grouped under four separate listings. The significance of this row of cottages is high owing to their evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal value at a regional and national level.

In assessing the application, it is considered that the level of harm to the setting of the Grade II listed group of cottages at Polly Green would be less than substantial as the conversion relates to more contemporary structures. There would be a change in appearance to the host building, but subject to appropriate design detailing and construction quality, this is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the character and appearance of the area. The loss of the contemporary garage door with a new pedestrian opening and window light cannot be considered as unduly harmful to the appearance of the area or be detrimental to the setting of the adjacent Grade II listed cottages. Changes to the row of buildings at Polly Green over time have not significantly altered their visual appearance, but internal alterations have almost certainly been made, not least the likely merging of presumed former back-to-back cottages.

Whilst no weight in the planning balance can be afforded to the recent public consultation on the potential for a new Syke Conservation Area, given that further remains to be carried prior to any potential designation in accordance with governance procedures, regard should still be had to the special characteristics of the area in respect of general good design principles, notably Paragraph 135 of the Framework.

Without being able to access satellite imagery of sufficient resolution and the plans lacking this crucial detail, this is a matter that should be addressed between the case officer and the applicant. Notable is the wording of Paragraph 135(a) of the Framework which requires that planning decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development.

Of particular concern regarding this application proposal is the more prosaic matter of bin storage arrangements for the retained dwelling at No. 143 Syke Road. Should at some point in the future when the separate planning unit is no longer required for the purposes as described within the application, there would be no capacity to store bins in the subdivided yard to the north of the proposed dwelling, nor it appears any viable route to store them in the garden of 143 and take them to the street for collection.

Paragraph 135(c) is also relevant to this application, which states that planning decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).

Crucially, subdivision and external alterations need not necessarily be unacceptable from a historic environment conservation perspective when balanced against other factors, subject to appropriate design, materials and construction detailing. However, the adequate servicing and functionality of both residential units would need to be clearly demonstrated to comply with the requirements of the Framework when read as a whole, or alternative options to meet the applicant's desire for more separate living accommodation on the site may need to be explored.

Should the application be approved, full materials details, section drawings for new installations including windows & doors with appropriate reveal depths and product specifications would need to be secured via condition.