

PROPOSED EXTENSION AT THE LOCK HOUSE

LITTLEBOROUGH, ROCHDALE, GREATER MANCHESTER



HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

GARRY MILLER
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GARRY MILLER HERITAGE CONSULTANCY

Garry Miller is a heritage consultant, architectural historian and published author who has spent more than 40 years studying and working with buildings of town and countryside, in particular those of North West England. His career as a consultant began in the mid-1980s with the Preston-based Nigel Morgan Historic Building Consultancy, of which he became a partner in 1992 upon its rebranding as Datestone. In 1997 he was commissioned by the Heritage Trust for the North West, a buildings preservation trust based at Barrowford, Lancashire, to produce an in-depth regional study of vernacular houses in southwest Lancashire: the result, *Historic Houses in Lancashire: The Douglas Valley, 1300-1770* was published in 2002. The book was described as ‘scholarship as its best’ by *Country Life* (June 2003), and ‘well analysed and presented’ in *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* (Vol 48, 2004); and was widely cited in the 2006 *Buildings of England* volume on Liverpool and Southwest Lancashire. Extensive research on the houses of Georgian and Regency Liverpool has also been undertaken, with a view to future publication. Following the success of his Douglas Valley book, Garry Miller established his own consultancy, producing analytical and interpretive reports on historic buildings, in particular the heritage assessments required to support planning applications affecting the historic environment. His area of operation encompasses the North West, Midlands, North Wales and parts of Cumbria and North and West Yorkshire. Several local authorities have cited his assessments as examples of best practice, and reports on more than 150 buildings or sites are produced annually.

THIS REPORT

Date of issue: December 2023

Purpose: for planning submission

Text: Garry Miller

Site survey: Peter Miller

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1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report supports proposed works at The Lock House, which is located in the Ealees district of Littleborough in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. The application property is, as its name suggests, was built as a lockkeeper's cottage on the Rochdale Canal, overlooking Lock 48, but is now a private residence. The property is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council. Around 200 metres northeast of the property is the Ealees Bridge over the canal, which is listed at Grade II.

Proposals have been submitted to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for a single-storey extension at the application property. The heritage issue arising is the impact upon the significance (heritage interest and value) of the undesignated building, along with the setting of the listed bridge.

The significance of The Lock House derives from its association with the first phase of the Rochdale Canal, and therefore dates probably from the period 1794-1798. The property has however undergone considerable alteration, including mock timber-framing and new windows, and hence this significance now derives from its historical associations with the canal along with its group value with Lock 48 and the Ealees Bridge, rather than its own individual qualities. A modern conservatory forms a negative addition and does not contribute to the significance of the application building.

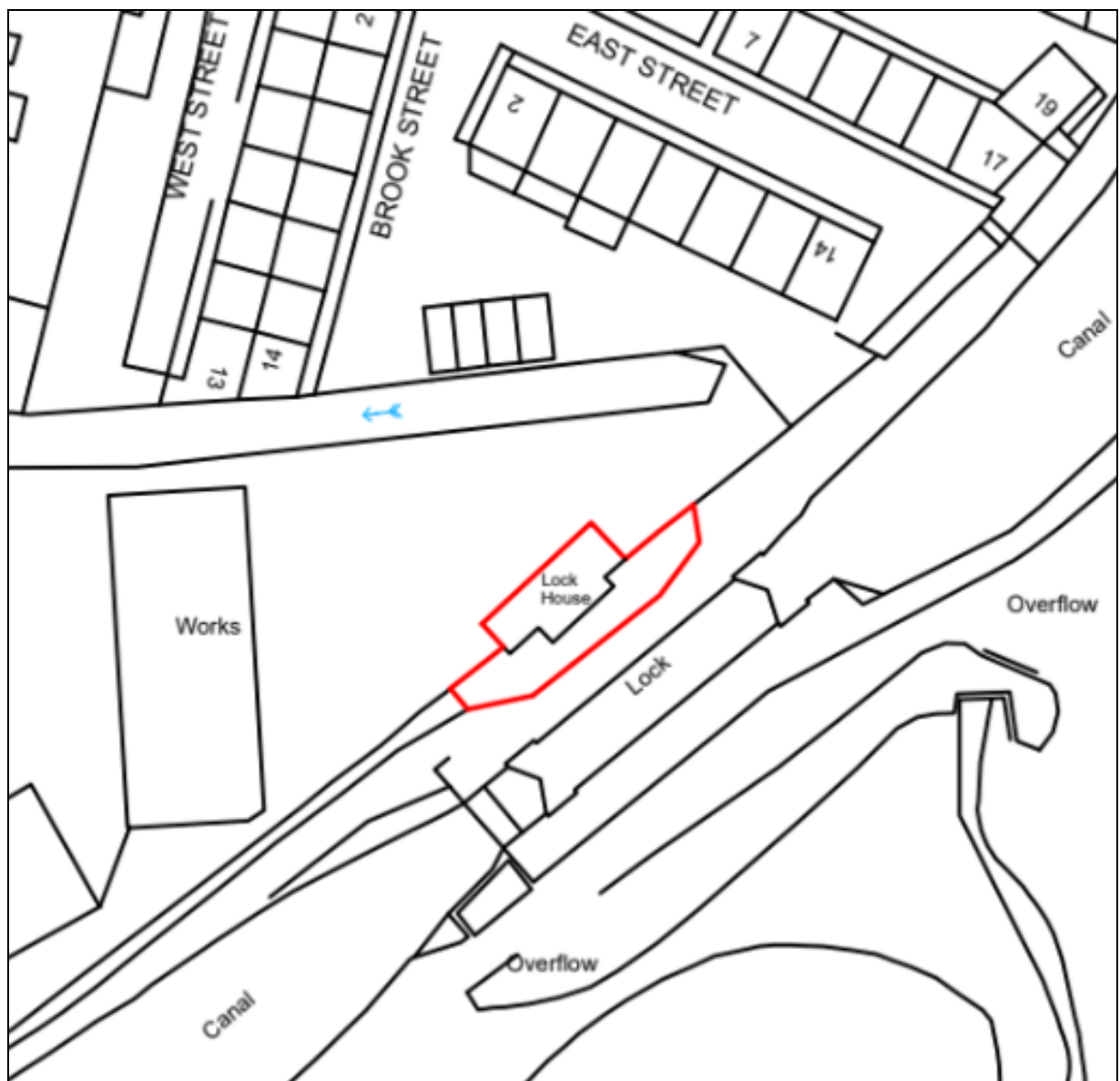
The Grade II designation of the bridge denotes it is of national importance for its special architectural and historic interest. Its significance derives from this special interest, which is that of a stone road bridge associated with the Rochdale Canal and dating from its initial 1794-1798 phase of construction. This intrinsic interest is enhanced by its group value with Lock 48, the application property and millworkers' cottages at Ealees, which are the legacy of the district's industrial past.

The scheme involves removal of the modern conservatory and addition of a single-storey stone extension to the front of the property, with first floor balconies on either side, as detailed in the submitted drawings.

Where heritage assets are undesignated, national guidance requires simply a balanced planning judgment that weighs the significance of the asset against any harm or loss; the relevant local development plan policy requires the asset's conservation and protection. As examined in this report, the proposal as submitted satisfies both these tests as it will result in no adverse effect on the historical associations and group value from which the significance of the undesignated building derives. As regards the listed bridge, separation distance from the application site render the proposal marginal to its setting and, on for this reason, unharmed. The proposal will thus sustain the significance of both the undesignated application building and listed bridge, and therefore accords with both national guidance and local policy and merits approval without delay.

2: THE SITE

The application property is The Lock House, which is located in the Ealees district on the eastern fringe of the town of Littleborough in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. The application property is, as its name suggests, was built as a lockkeeper's cottage on the Rochdale Canal, but is now a private residence. It stands on the canal towpath, adjoining Lock 48, while to the rear the ground steeply falls to the Ealees Brook and mid-19th century terraced cottages beyond, built probably for workers at the now-demolished Brookfield Cotton Mill which stood to the west of the application property.



Map 1. Location of the application property



1. *The Lock House, viewed from across Lock 48*



2. *More distant view from the canal's western towpath*

3: THE PROPOSAL/SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

3.1 Proposed development

Proposals have been submitted to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for a single-storey extension at the application property.

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3.2 Designation

The Lock House is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset by Rochdale MBC. It also stands within the wider setting of the Grade II listed Ealees Bridge over the Rochdale Canal.

3.3 Heritage impact

The heritage issue arising is the impact upon the significance (heritage interest and value) of the undesignated building, along with the setting of the listed bridge.

3.4 Scope and purpose of this report

Paragraph 194 of Chapter 16 (*Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*) the National Planning Policy Framework (as revised, July 2021) states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the particular significance of the heritage asset, including the contribution made by its setting. The scope and purpose of this report is therefore to identify the significance of the undesignated building and listed bridge, and to assess how this will be affected by the proposal. In accordance with paragraph 194, the level of detail is considered proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset, and no more than necessary to understand the impact of the proposal. The report is to be read in conjunction with other documentation submitted in support of the application.

3.5 Report structure

This is as follows:

1. A concise, proportionate description of the undesignated building (Section 4) and the listed bridge (Section 5)
2. A summary of their heritage significance (Section 6)
3. A summary of the planning policy context in which the application will be determined (Section 7)
4. Evaluation within this context of the impact of the proposal upon the significance of the undesignated building (Section 8).

4: THE APPLICATION BUILDING

4.1 Overview

Altered lockkeeper's cottage adjoining the Ealees Lock of the Rochdale Canal.



3. Panoramic view of the cottage adjoining lock 48

4.2 Historical context

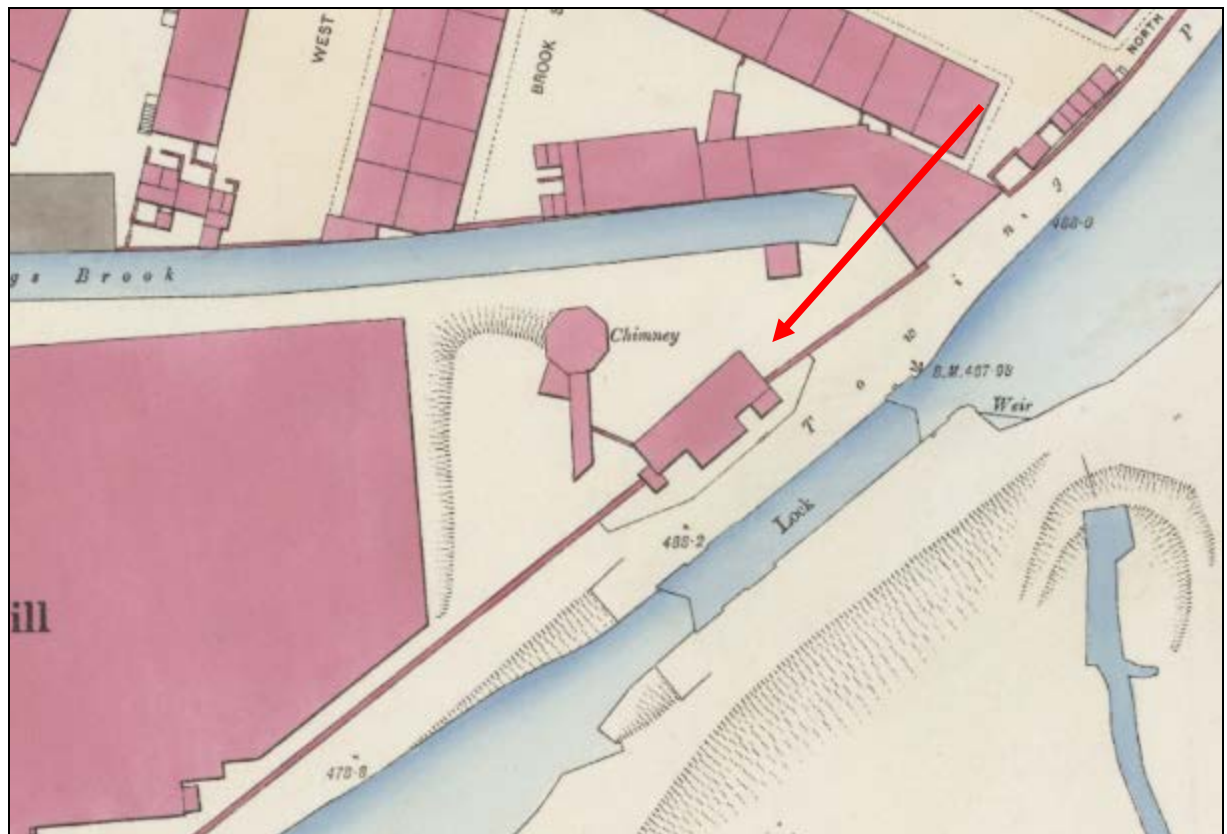
The application property was built to serve the Rochdale Canal, first proposed in 1776 to connect the mills of Sowerby Bridge in Yorkshire with Manchester. The scheme however encountered various setbacks and the act for its consent was not finally obtained until April 4, 1794. The Rochdale branch opened first, in 1798, with further sections the following year, but the canal did not officially open until 1804, with some construction work continuing thereafter and a Heywood-Castleton branch opening as late as 1834. The 32-mile canal was in its heyday the principal commercial route between Lancashire and Yorkshire, carrying cotton, coal, wool, timber and other commodities. Trade however fell significantly following the opening of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway in 1841, and steadily declining traffic in the late 19th and early 20th century eventually led to the closure of most of the canal in 1952. Following restoration work the canal reopened to navigation in 2002.

4.3 The building itself

The application property is a three-storey structure situated adjoining the Ealees Lock (Lock 48), the bottom lock of the Littleborough flight and one of 92 on the canal in total. The property originally dates probably from 1794-1798, the date of the construction of the Rochdale section of the canal. It occupies a shallow T-shaped footprint, with a projecting gabled centre section, but the OS mapping of the mid-1840s (Map 2, below) shows a slightly different shape with extensions at each end, which still remained in 1890-1891 (Map 3). The ground floor (level with the canal towpath) and basement are of stone, but the upper floor is rendered with mock timber framing. This is probably mid-20th century attempt to decorate a building that would otherwise have had a functional appearance. The mock framing has also experienced some alteration, as a slightly different pattern in the front gable is shown on a drawing of probably 1970s date (Plate 4). All windows are modern, and are shown as being small-paned in the 1970s drawing, which also depicts a lean-to porch right of the gabled projection. The ground floor window in this projection appears to have replaced a door, and a blocked opening to its left appears to be the original window, adjoining a side window that allowed views westwards along the canal. The roof is of slate with terracotta ridge tiles. Right of the gabled section is a single-storey modern conservatory, while to the left of it the first floor is jettied out, supported at the left end by a post on a large padstone.



Map 2. The property as depicted by the six-inch OS map surveyed 1847-1848



Map 3. How it is depicted by the OS 50-inch town plan of 1890-1891



4. Probably 1970s drawing of the application property, showing porch and slightly different gable framing pattern



5. The property viewed from the west, showing jettied first floor left of projection



6. View from east showing modern conservatory



7. Ground floor central window seems to have replaced doorway; blocked window to its right



8. The building viewed from Brook Street to the north

5: THE LISTED BRIDGE

The Ealees Bridge carries Ealees Road over the canal and is located around 200 metres northeast of the application property. First listed in 1986, the brief National Heritage List for England's description reads:

Road bridge. Between 1794 and 1798. William Jessop engineer. Hammer-dressed stone. Elliptical keystone arch with rusticated voussoirs. Parapet walls above a stone band have round-topped copings and square terminating piers.

As to the setting of the bridge, this is essentially defined by the canal and its infrastructure – namely lock 48 and the application building itself – along with the stone terraced cottages on and around Ealees Road, which are the legacy of the area's industrial past.



9. The bridge, viewed from the towpath northeast of the Lock House

6: SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

6.1 Rationale

Paragraph 195 of the National Planning Policy Framework states local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, and take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal in order to avoid or minimize conflict between the asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal. Significance is defined in the NPPF Glossary as:

The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

6.2 The Lock House

The significance of the Lock House derives from being a lockkeeper's cottage associated with the first phase of the Rochdale Canal, and therefore dating probably from the period 1794-1798. The property has however undergone considerable alteration, including mock timber-framing and new windows, and hence this significance now derives from its historical associations with the canal along with its group value with Lock 48 and the Ealees Bridge, rather than its own individual qualities. The modern conservatory forms a negative addition and does not contribute to the significance of the application building

6.3 The Ealees Bridge

The Grade II designation of the bridge denotes it is of national importance for its special architectural and historic interest. Its significance derives from this special interest, which is that of a stone bridge associated with the Rochdale Canal and dating from its initial 1794-17908 phase of construction. This intrinsic interest is enhanced by its group value with Lock 48, the application property and the millworkers' cottages at Ealees.

7: PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

7.1 Statutory duty

Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to give special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.

7.2 Relevant policies

Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework) provides the guidance on how this statutory duty is to be put into practice. Paragraph 197 states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation*
- *The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, and*
- *The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*

Regarding designated heritage assets, paragraph 199 states that ‘great weight’ should be given to their conservation and the more important the asset, the greater that weight should be; that significance can be lost through development within its setting. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 203 specifically applies to undesignated heritage assets:

The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Locally, Policy P2a (Protecting and Enhancing Character, Landscape and Heritage) of the Rochdale Core Strategy, formally adopted on October 19, 2016, states that key heritage assets, both statutory and non-statutory, will be conserved, enhanced and promoted, including consideration of their wider settings.

8: IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL

8.1 Summary of the scheme

The scheme involves removal of the modern conservatory and addition of a single-storey stone extension to the front of the property, with first floor balconies on either side, as shown in the submitted drawings.



10. Visualisation of the proposed extension

8.2 Its effect

- a. **On the application building.** It is concluded in this report that the significance of the application building resides primarily in its historical associations with the canal and group value with the waterway infrastructure, and these qualities will not be altered or obscured by the proposed extension. The proposed extension will remove the detractive conservatory and replace it with an extension of more appropriate materiality, its stonework matching that of the ground floor and basement of the building. The extension will be subservient to the host building, and as regards its footprint, it has been noted in the historic mapping that extensions previously existed at either end of the building, and hence the proposal will take up some of the area they formerly occupied. The first floor balconies are glazed and thus allow views through to the mock timber-framing.
 - **Summary of effect: neutral**

- b. On the listed bridge.** As noted above, the group value that exists between the canal, lock and bridge and the application building will not be impaired by the proposal. In terms of the setting of the bridge, the separation of around 200 metres that exists between the listed building and application property renders its effect marginal. There will therefore be no adverse effect upon its setting, and positive views both to and from the bridge along the towpath will be sustained.

- **Summary of effect: neutral**



11. View from the bridge towards the Lock House



12. View from The Lock House towards the bridge

8.3 Concluding statement

Where heritage assets are undesignated, national guidance requires simply a balanced planning judgment that weighs the significance of the asset against any harm or loss; the relevant local development plan policy requires the asset's conservation and protection. The proposal as submitted satisfies both these tests as it will result in no adverse effect on the historical associations and group value from which the significance of the undesignated building derives. As regards the listed bridge, the separation distance from the application site renders the proposal marginal to its setting and, for this reason, unharmful. The proposal will thus sustain the significance of both the undesignated application building and listed bridge, and therefore accords with both national guidance and local policy and merits approval without delay.