

OUTBUILDING CONVERSION AT LEACHES FARM

HEYWOOD, METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ROCHDALE



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 35 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

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1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The application building is located at Leaches Farm, Heywood, in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. It is a long-disused and derelict outbuilding that has undergone a complex evolution spanning the 17th to the 19th centuries. In planning terms it is an undesignated heritage asset.

Proposals have been submitted to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for conversion of the application property to a dwelling. The heritage issue arising is the impact upon its significance (heritage interest and value). The scope and purpose of this report is to identify this significance and assess how the proposal will affect it.

Fabric evidence suggests it was originally a *laithe house*, a building typical of upland farmsteads that comprises house and barn under the same roof. The earliest fabric suggests it was of early/mid 17th century date. The building then appears to have been adapted for handloom weaving in the 18th century, and subsequently extended and converted to entirely agricultural use as a barn and shippens. Given that alteration and long dereliction has resulted in the loss of much of its original fabric, its significance is restricted to the local context only and derives from the following:

- Its architectural interest as a former *laithe* house of likely early-mid 17th century date that was converted to a loomshop in the 18th century and thereafter to entirely agricultural use in the 19th century
- Its historical interest as an example of a moorland farmstead building that associated with the domestic textile industry
- Its setting as part of a moorland fold, a settlement pattern typical of the Lancashire Pennines

Owing to the loss of most of the interior, this significance is embodied primarily within the external envelope and landscape presence of the undesignated building. However, owing to this extensive deterioration, it is fair and accurate to state that this is a building at risk and that its significance is jeopardised by lack of a sustainable use.

The proposal seeks to put the building to this sustainable use, which will secure its future and preserve the essence of its local architectural and historic interest. The applicant purchased the building with extant permission for two dwellings. The present scheme is considerably more favourable as it retains the building in single ownership.

A previous proposal for the conversion, which involved a greater degree of intervention, was not supported by Rochdale's conservation officer. In designing the present scheme, these objections have been taken on board and a more restrained approach undertaken. As the significance of the undesignated building lies primarily in its external envelope and presence within the landscape, the scheme as submitted will essentially preserve these qualities. The form of the building is being retained, and original openings used wherever possible. A limited number of new openings are sought, but this is inevitable when dealing with a building that was never in the main intended for domestic occupation. The same context applies to interior alterations, but

the essential interior arrangement will remain legible, and the level of intervention is far less than it would be if two dwellings were created. Modest extensions of single-storey form are also required at each end, which respect the principal building in their scale, appearance and character. Furthermore, map evidence reveals that now-vanished projections, most likely single-storey, stood at the east end and the rear: hence the extensions therefore essentially reinstate lost elements of the building. The overall effect is therefore to sustain the interest, character and legibility of the unlisted building.

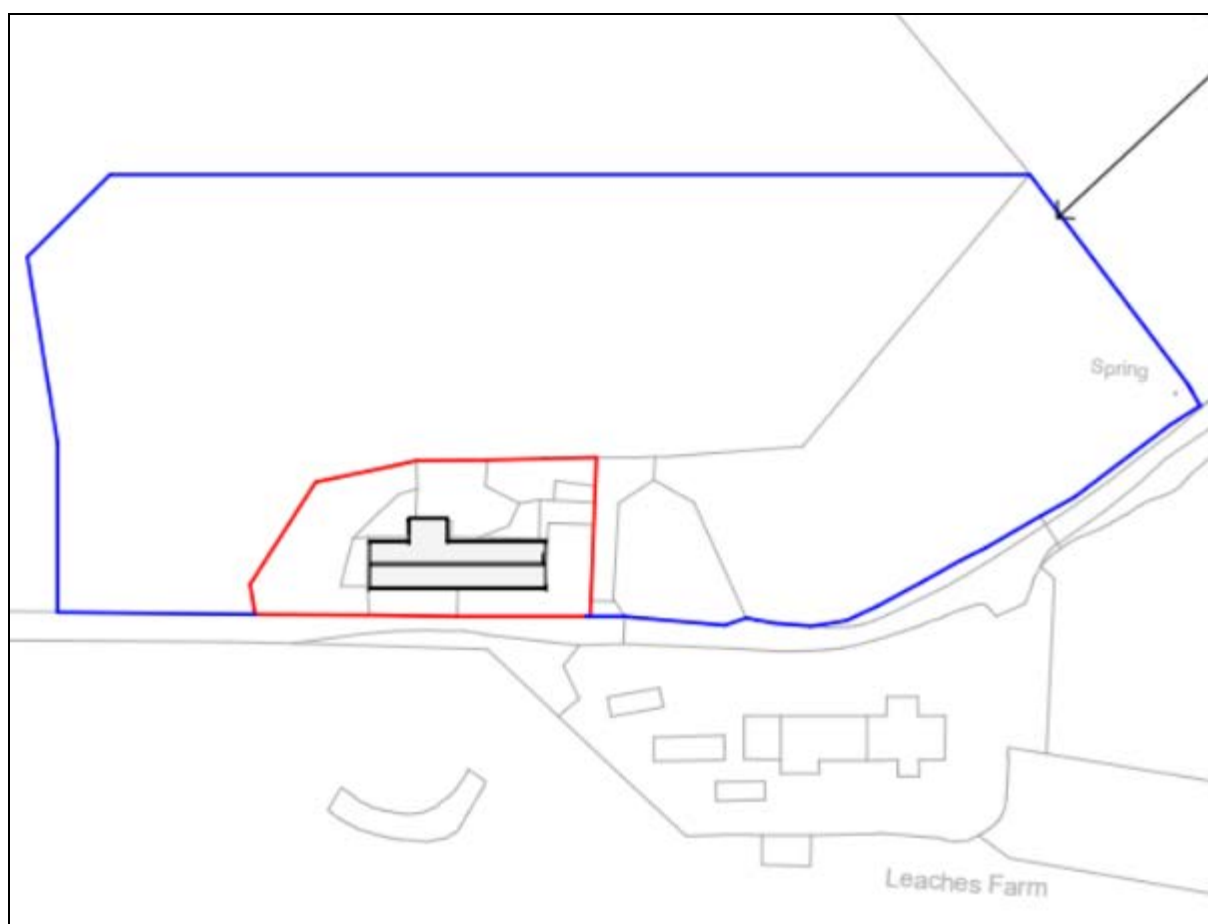
Where heritage assets are undesignated, national guidance requires simply a *balanced planning judgement* on the scheme: there is not the presumption to preserve or enhance that applies to designated heritage assets. In making this balanced assessment, it should be incontestably apparent that the scheme is favourable as:

- It rescues the unlisted building from redundancy and decay
- It puts it to a sustainable use that will secure its future
- It respects the qualities from which its significance is derived

For these reasons, approval should be granted without delay.

2: THE SITE

The application building is located at Leaches Farm, Heywood, in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. Leaches is an isolated farmstead located around five kilometres northwest of Heywood town centre amid the Pennine moorlands between Rochdale and Bury, where it overlooks the valley of the Cheesden Brook. The application property is a long-disused and derelict outbuilding which stands on a track leading off Ashworth Road, and around 50 metres northwest of the farmhouse at Leaches Farm. Together they form a *fold*, a cluster of farm buildings typical of the Lancashire Pennines.



Map 1. The application building



1. The outbuilding (left) forms part of the fold at Leaches Farm: view from south



2. The outbuilding as it appears from the east

3: THE PROPOSAL/SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

3.1 Proposed development

Proposals have been submitted to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for conversion of the application property to a single dwelling.

3.2 Designations

The building is being treated for the purposes of the application as an undesignated heritage asset by Rochdale MBC.

3.3 Heritage impact

The heritage issue arising is the impact upon the setting and therefore the significance (heritage interest and value) of the undesignated building.

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 their setting. The scope and purpose of this report is therefore to identify the significance of the undesignated building, 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

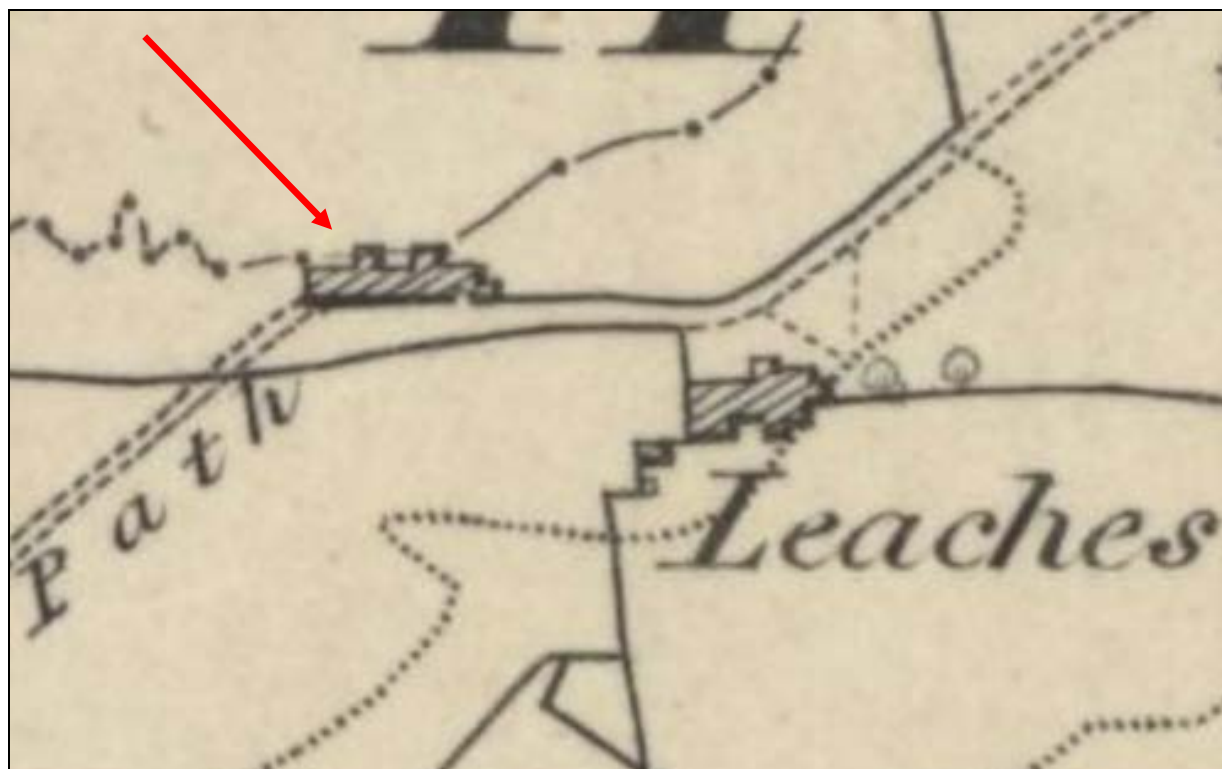
This is as follows:

1. A summary of the historical background relating to the site (Section 4)

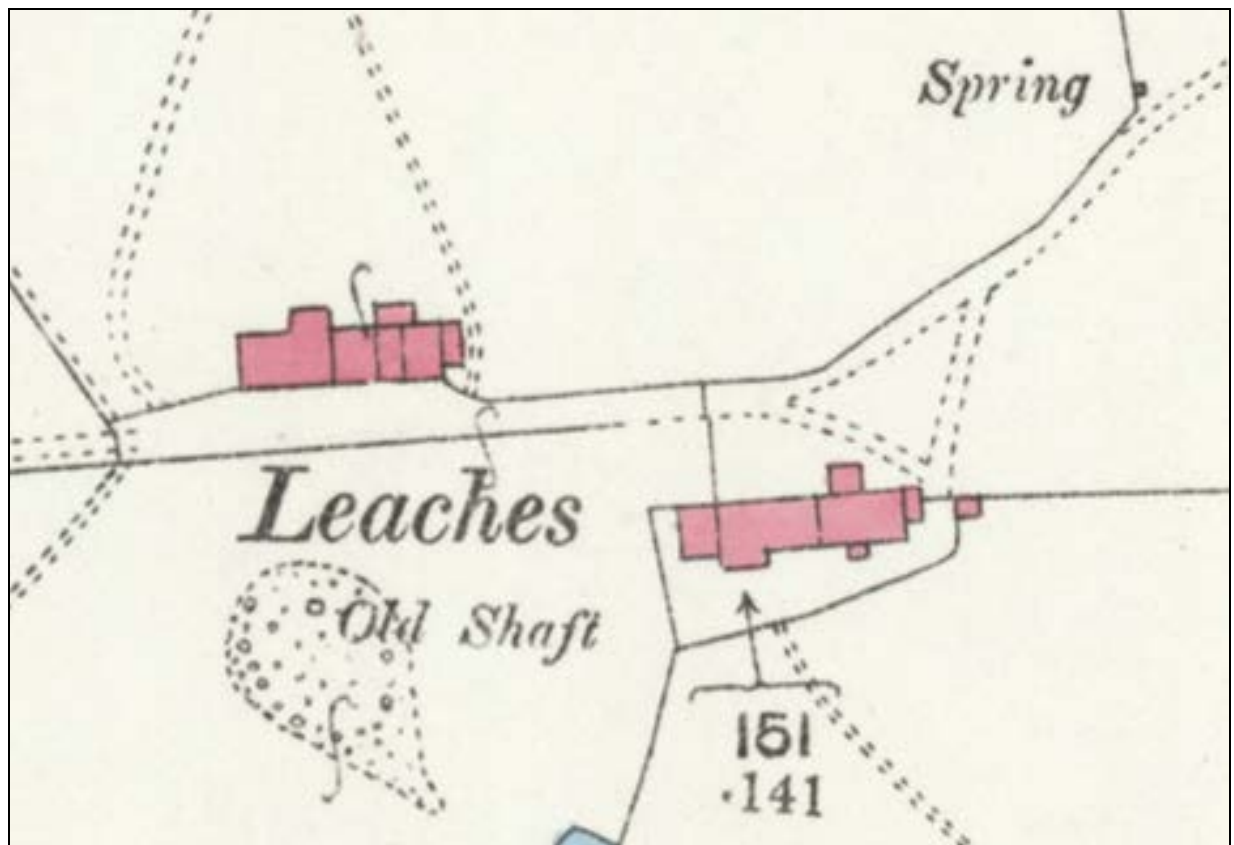
2. A description of the undesignated building (Section 5)
3. A summary of its heritage significance (Section 6)
4. A summary of the planning policy context in which the application will be determined (Section 7)
5. Evaluation within this context of the impact of the proposal upon the significance of the undesignated building (Section 8).

4: HISTORICAL SUMMARY

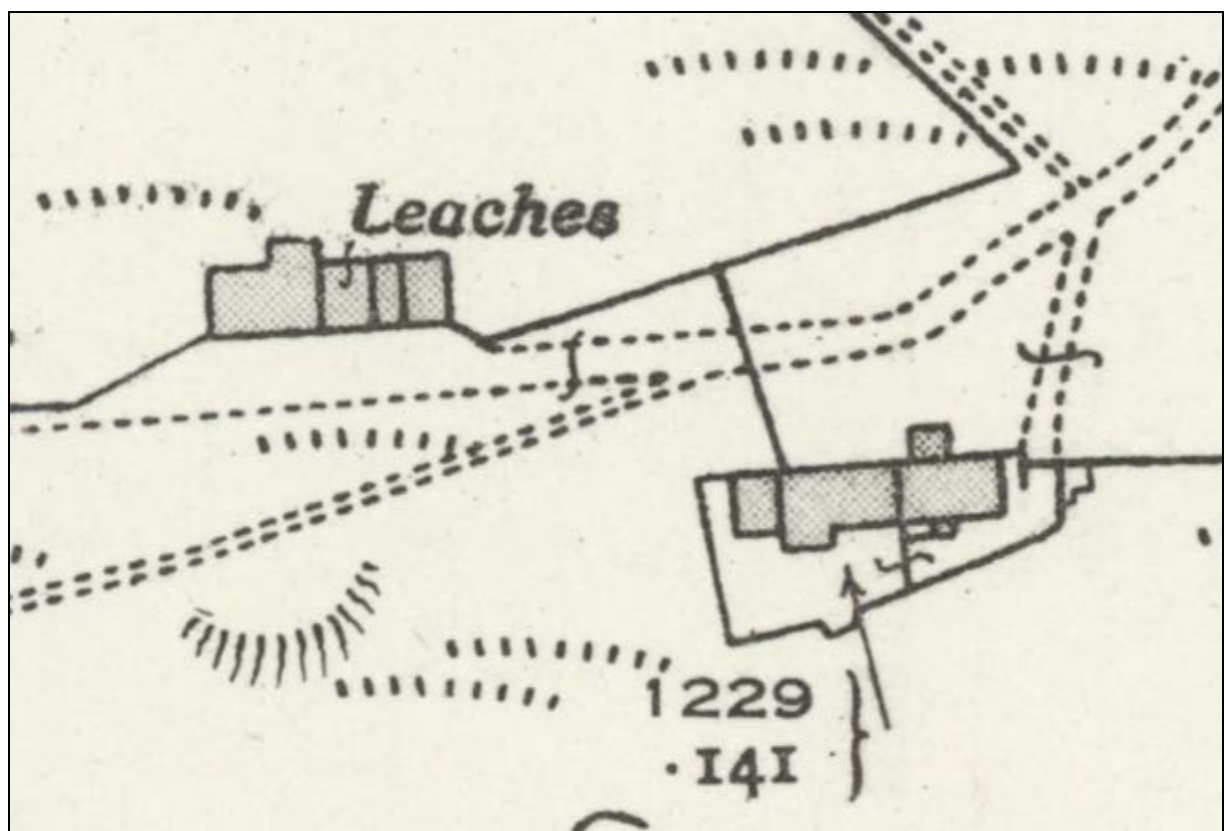
Fabric evidence suggests the property was originally a *laithe house*, a building typical of upland farmsteads that comprises a house and barn under the same roof. The earliest fabric suggests it was of probably mid-late 17th century date. The building then appears to have been adapted for handloom weaving in the 18th century, and subsequently extended and converted to entirely agricultural use as a barn and shippens. The OS mapping of the mid-1840s (Map 2, below) shows a building of somewhat different footprint, with two outshuts at the rear and a small projection at the east end. This footprint remained the same at the end of the century, when the edition of 1890 (Map 3) shows it was subdivided internally in the manner which exists now. By 1939 (Map 4), the eastern outshut and small projection had gone, leaving the building in its present footprint.



Map 2. A different footprint, with two rear outshuts and a small projection at the east end is recorded by the six-inch OS map surveyed in 1844-1847



Map 3. The building is shown subdivided by the 25-inch edition of 1890



Map 4. The edition of 1939 shows the building had now assumed its present footprint

5: THE UNDESIGNATED BUILDING

5.1 Overview

Derelict, long-disused farm outbuilding of complex evolution, being originally an early/mid 17th century laithe house subsequently adapted for weaving and thereafter extended and converted to entirely agricultural use.

5.2 Form

Long rectangular main range of five internal bays, with outshut behind the second bay.

5.3 Date

The third to fourth bays are probably early/mid 17th century, with 18th century alteration. The outshut and part of the west gable are probably the remains of an early 18th century extension. The first and second bays are probably a mid/late 18th century rebuilding of this, with further reconstruction in the 19th century.

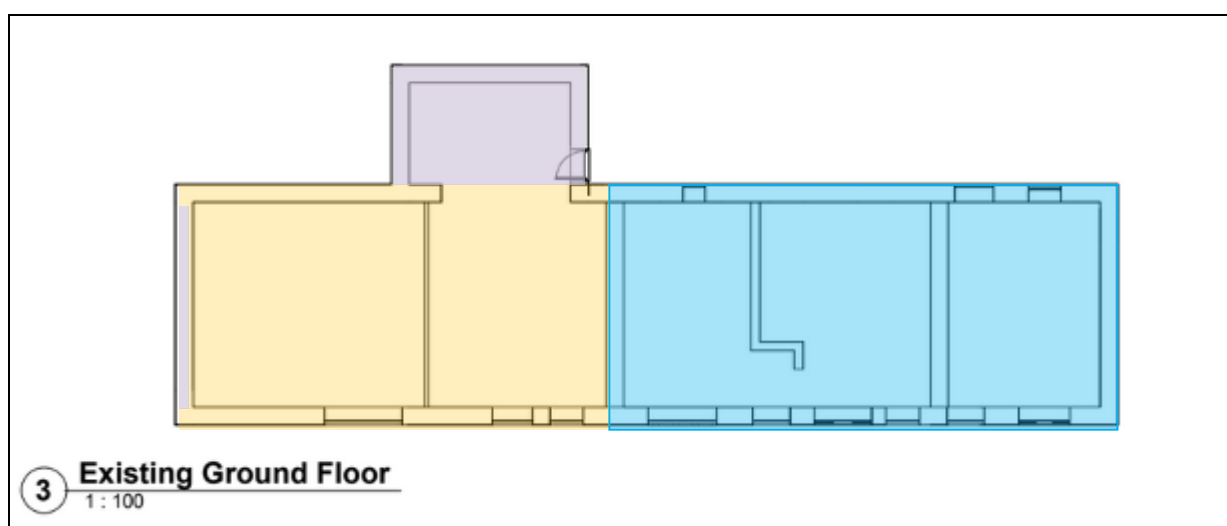


Figure 1. Elements of the building:

	Early/mid 17 th century, altered mid-18 th century
	Early 18 th century
	Mid/late 18 th century, /rebuilt 19 th century

5.4 Exterior

- a. **Front elevation.** Beginning at the east end, where the evidence of the oldest fabric is to be found, the fifth bay has a three-light window (possibly cut down from the bottom and reused) with chamfered mullions, and next to it a doorway with triangular-headed lintel. These details are clearly domestic rather than agricultural and suggest this portion of the building was originally a dwelling. On the first floor is a partly-blocked window. The fourth bay has a punched-through doorway and horizontal window (with later timber mullions) adjoining. On the first floor is what appears originally to have been an especially long window of up to 12 lights running across the third and fourth bays, the eastern portion of which has now been extended downwards to create a loading door. Its square mullions indicate an 18th century date, and its size indicates the presence of a loomshop on this floor. On the ground floor of the third bay is another inserted door and horizontal window opening, left of which are quoins marking the original termination of the 17th century building. The second bay is in squared watershot rubble of mid/late 18th century appearance, with a doorway and what was originally a mid-height window later extended downwards to form a tall door opening. The first bay now has the appearance of a barn with large wagon entrance and has been rebuilt in brick of early/mid 19th century appearance.
- b. **East elevation.** The lower portion is shored up by a makeshift full-length buttress, probably early 20th century and resulting from the demolition of the projection at this end. Disruption in the masonry suggests a removed central chimneystack has been removed. On the first floor is a blocked two-light window offcentre to the right, which provides further evidence for the stack.
- c. **Rear.** Mostly blank, with a three-light window at the easternmost bay and a doorway to its right, now partly blocked to form a window. Right of this, part of the upper floor masonry has collapsed; on the ground floor is a small frameless window and evidence of a blocked doorway that would have accessed the now-removed outshut. The remaining outshut is largely blank and partly collapsed, with a loading door to the hayloft on the east elevation at the junction with the main range. The remainder of the rear is of early/mid 19th century brick and blank apart from a section adjoining the outshut, which is of stone with evidence of a blocked ground floor window, originally segment-headed.
- d. **West elevation.** Blank. The masonry shows evidence of three building phases, with the earliest being coursed rubble in the centre. This (and the outshut) appear to be the remnant of the original end wall of an early 18th century extension to the 17th century building. Above is squared rubble in the gable (mid/late 18th century) and brick rebuilding (early/mid 19th century) at the corners.



3. *Mullioned window and doorway with triangular-headed lintel in fifth bay*



4. *East gable, where projection and stack have been removed*



5. Long weavers' window in third and fourth bays, with quoins at end of 17th century element



6. Fifth bay with front elevation rebuilt in early/mid 19th century brick



7. Rear elevation has partly collapsed



8. Rear of the third-fifth bays



9. West gable incorporates masonry of three periods, with remnant of early 18th century extension subsumed within later rebuilding

5.5 Interior

The interior is now derelict throughout and its appearance is that of its most recent use, i.e. as shippens and barn/farm storage. Its value is therefore low. Within this context, the principal features remaining are:

- Two hand-sawn kingpost trusses, with ridge and purlins, over the original 17th century element, now in the third and fourth bays. These bays are now separated by a later brick crosswall, indicating they originally formed a single space, i.e. the barn element of the laithe house
- Fragmentary evidence of blocked/removed fireplaces on the ground and first floors of the fifth bay
- Machine-cut kingpost truss, in the first bay. This probably dates from the 19th century brick rebuilding



10. Fifth bay, looking to front



11. Kingpost truss over fourth bay



12. Truss over third bay – crosswall beyond is later



13. First bay, showing machine cut kingpost truss



14. Interior of the fourth bay



15. Interior of the second bay

5.6 Evolution

Based on the evidence above, the following evolution sequence is suggested:

- **Early/mid 17th century:** the property was first built, taking the form of a small three-bay laithe house with two-bay barn and single-bay house at the east end
- **Early 18th century:** this building was extended to the west, a phase from which only the outshut and part of the west wall now survive
- **Early/mid 18th century:** a loomshop was created on the first floor of what was originally the barn element, perhaps when the building was extended as above
- **Mid/late 18th century:** the first and second bays were added, replacing the early 18th century extension
- **Early 19th century:** the first and second bays were largely rebuilt in brick and probably reroofed at this time, probably for structural reasons
- **Mid/late 19th century:** the building became entirely converted to agricultural use, most likely with the replacement of the cottage textile industry by the factory system

6: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UNLISTED BUILDING

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 Summary

Given that alteration and long dereliction has resulted in the loss of much of its original fabric, the significance of the unlisted building is restricted to the local context only (i.e. to Rochdale as a borough). In concise terms, this significance derives from the following:

- Its architectural interest as a former laithe house of likely early/mid 17th century date that underwent a subsequent complex evolution during which it was converted to textile and thereafter agricultural use in the 18th and 19th centuries
- Its historical interest as an example of a moorland farmstead building that became associated with the domestic textile industry
- Its setting as part of a moorland fold, a settlement pattern typical of the Lancashire Pennines

Given the loss of most of the interior, this significance is embodied primarily within the external envelope and landscape presence of the undesignated building. However, owing to this extensive deterioration, it is fair to state this is a building at risk and that its significance is jeopardised by its disused state and lack of a sustainable use.

7: PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides the guidance on how applications affecting the historic environment are to be determined. 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 undesignated heritage assets, paragraph 203 specifically applies:

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 application seeks consent for conversion and extension of the undesignated building to form a single dwelling, as fully detailed in the submitted drawings.



16. Proposed front elevation

8.2 Its effect

- a. **Principle of the scheme.** The building is disused and derelict and it is at risk owing to its condition. The purpose for which it was originally built has long since ceased. The proposal seeks to put the building to a sustainable alternative use which will secure its future and preserve the essence of its local architectural and historic interest. The applicant purchased the building with extant permission for two dwellings. The present scheme is considerably more favourable as it retains the building in single ownership.
- b. **Design.** A previous proposal for the conversion, which involved a greater degree of intervention, was not supported by Rochdale's conservation officer, who considered it represented 'substantial harm' to the undesignated building. In designing the present scheme, these objections have been taken on board and a more restrained approach undertaken. It has been demonstrated in this report that the significance of the undesignated building lies primarily in its external envelope and presence

within the landscape. The scheme as submitted will essentially preserve these qualities. The form of the building is being retained, and original openings used wherever they allow. A limited number of new openings are sought, but this is inevitable when converting a building that was never (in the main) intended for domestic occupation. The same context applies to internal alterations, but the essential interior arrangement will remain legible and the level of intervention is far less than if two dwellings were created. Additionally, modest extensions of single storey form are also required at each end. These are entirely acceptable in that they respect in their scale, appearance and character of the principal building. Furthermore, there is evidence that a now-vanished projection, most likely single-storey, stood at the east end along with a second outshut at the rear. The extensions therefore essentially reinstate lost elements of the building. The overall effect is therefore to sustain the interest, character and legibility of the unlisted building.

8.3 Conclusion

Where heritage assets are undesignated, the guidance in paragraph 203 of the NPPF requires simply a *balanced planning judgement* on the scheme; there is not the presumption to preserve or enhance that applies to designated heritage assets. In making this balanced assessment, it should therefore be incontestably apparent that the scheme is favourable as:

- It rescues the unlisted building from redundancy and decay
- It puts it to a sustainable use that will secure its future
- It respects the qualities from which its significance is derived

For these reasons, approval should be granted without delay.