

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT TOWER STREET

HEYWOOD, METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ROCHDALE



HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

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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: February 2024

Purpose: for planning submission

Text: Garry Miller

Site survey: Peter Miller

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1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report supports proposed redevelopment at Tower Street, Heywood, in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. It affects a vacant site which formerly contained the Heywood public house prior to its demolition earlier this year. The site lies opposite the Church of St James, which is listed at Grade II.

Proposals have been submitted to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for a new residential development upon the site. The heritage issue arising is therefore the impact upon the setting and therefore the significance (heritage interest and value) of the listed building. The scope and purpose of this report is to identify this significance and how the proposal affects it.

The Grade II designation of St James's Church denotes it is a building of national importance for its special architectural and historic interest. Its significance essentially derives from this intrinsic special interest: architecturally, it is that of an early Victorian church of 1838 designed in a revivalist Decorated style, while historically it is associated with the early 19th century growth of Heywood and the local mill owners who financed the building. Its setting is no longer the 19th century urban surroundings in which it stood but an altered streetscene in which stand the survivors of the original buildings along with modern development and cleared spaces. The importance of this setting to the significance of the listed building has therefore been diminished by change.

In its present derelict state the site harms the setting of the listed building.

The proposal is for construction of a total of eleven three/four bedroomed dwellings, which will be arranged in two blocks. While the scheme will affect views of the listed church from the east, other viewpoints, especially those which capture the listed building's relationship with other survivors of its 19th century townscape, will be less affected. The proposal's effect on the setting of St James's Church therefore has limitations. Its intrinsic architectural and historic interest will however be entirely unaffected.

Given the diminished importance of the listed building's surroundings, and the scheme's limited visual impacts, the effect of the proposal translates, in planning terms, into less than substantial harm to its setting and significance. National planning guidance therefore requires the harm to be weighed against the public benefits arising from the proposal. These benefits are the regeneration of a previously-developed urban site – now an eyesore – to provide eleven family houses within an accessible part of the borough, along with the associated gains to the local economy which this entails.

These benefits weigh favourably against the low level of harm to the devalued setting of the listed building and hence the application merits approval on this basis.

2: THE SITE

The application site lies southwest of the town centre of Heywood, one of the communities in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. It is a vacant space at the junction of Tower Street and Brunswick Street, which formerly contained the Heywood public house prior to its demolition earlier this year. The site lies within a network of streets laid out in the mid-19th century and surrounding the Church of St James, which stands opposite the site.



Map 1. Location of the application site



1. View towards St James's Church from Brunswick Street across the application site

3: THE PROPOSAL/SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

3.1 Proposed development

Proposals have been submitted to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for a new residential development of eleven dwellings upon the site.

3.2 Designation

The site adjoins, and therefore forms part of the immediate surroundings, of the Grade II listed Church of St James on Tower Street.

3.3 Heritage impact

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

3.4 Scope and purpose of this report

Paragraph 200 of Chapter 16 (*Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*) the National Planning Policy Framework (as revised, December 2023) states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the particular significance of the heritage asset. The scope and purpose of this report is therefore to identify the significance of the listed building and the contribution made by the application site, and to assess how this will be affected by the proposal. In accordance with paragraph 200, 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, and supersedes any previously-submitted heritage assessment.

3.5 Report structure

This is as follows:

1. A proportionate description of the listed building and its setting (Section 4) and the contribution made by the application site to this setting (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 setting and significance of the listed building (Section 8).

4: THE LISTED BUILDING



2. *St James, viewed from the west at the Tower Street/St James' Terrace junction*

4.1 Overview

Disused early Victorian suburban church amid altered surroundings now of a mixed architectural character.

4.2 Historical summary

St. James's Church was consecrated in 1838 to cater for the growing population of the district and was funded by local mill-owning families. The architect is not known. The church replaced an earlier mission chapel and was preceded by its Sunday School of 1837, which stands on Tower Street. It was originally the centre of a much larger parish

that was later subdivided as other churches (e.g. St George's, Heap Bridge, of 1891) were established. The building finally closed for worship in 2014.

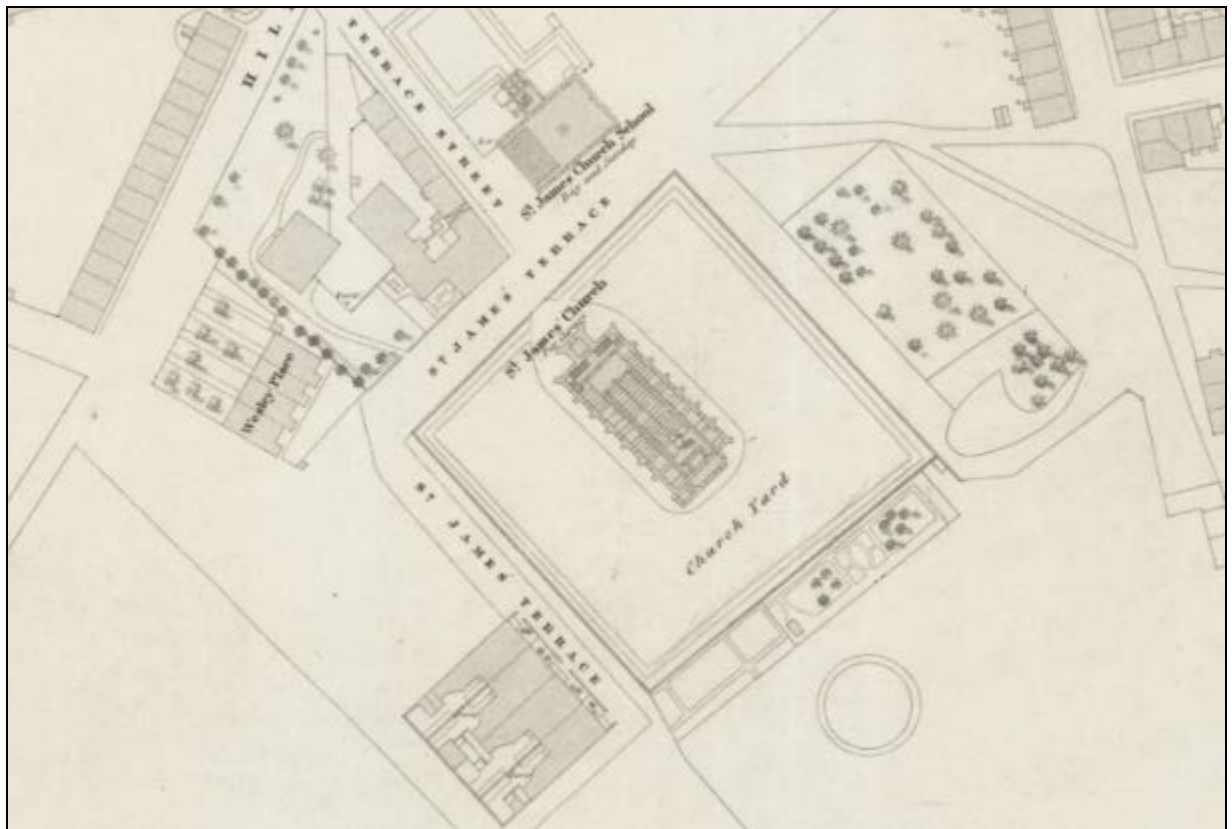
4.3 List description

The National Heritage List for England description of St James's, compiled at the time of listing in 1985, reads:

Church. 1838. Chancel 1861. Ashlar with slate roof. Nave with galleries on three sides, central west tower and short chancel with vestries to north and south. 7-bay nave with stone plinth, eaves parapet, door in western bay, weathered buttresses and Y-traceried pointed openings to all the other bays. The tower has diagonal buttresses, 3-clock faces, stone band, 2 lancet openings to the bell stage, castellations and plain pinnacles. The 1-bay chancel and vestry have traceried windows with drip moulds, the east window having 5 lights and stained glass by Hardman. Interior: the gallery has a panelled parapet, stands on cast iron columns and accommodates the organ on the right hand side. Massive cranked and cusped roof trusses with heraldic and stiffleaf bosses.

4.4 Setting

- a. **Historic development.** Historic mapping shows the church was intended as the focus of a residential square defined by terraces. The Heywood town plan of 1848 (Map 2, following page) shows this arrangement in embryonic form, with what was named St James Terrace laid out on the northwest and southwest sides, and gardens to the northeast and southeast. However any grand intentions appear ultimately to have stalled, as the edition of 1890 (Map 3) shows the square had never been completed and the northwest side of St James Terrace was now part of Tower Street. The surrounding area had by this time become dominated by working class terraces interspersed with occasional industrial buildings.
- b. **The present day.** Today, the disused St James's Church stands in an elevated, island-like location amid its churchyard, surrounded by a mixed streetscene which contains the survivors of the 19th century townscape along with modern development and many vacant, cleared spaces. While the original 19th century street pattern remains legible, many of its buildings have gone, although notable survivors include the Sunday School on Tower Street, houses on the southwest side of St James' Terrace and the former Cartridge Ropery to the east on Wesley Street. These represent the most important elements of the listed building's setting as they evoke its original surroundings. Apartments to the north of Tower Street and the many vacant sites are newcomers to this setting and hence are of less importance.



Map 2. St James amid its embryonic residential square as recorded by the OS Heywood town plan of 1851



Map 3. The edition of 1890 shows the area was now characterised mainly by working class terraces



3. Cleared streets, surviving 19th century buildings and modern development all now form the setting of St James's: view from Fox Street to the east, across Brunswick Street



4. The Sunday School of 1837 on Tower Street



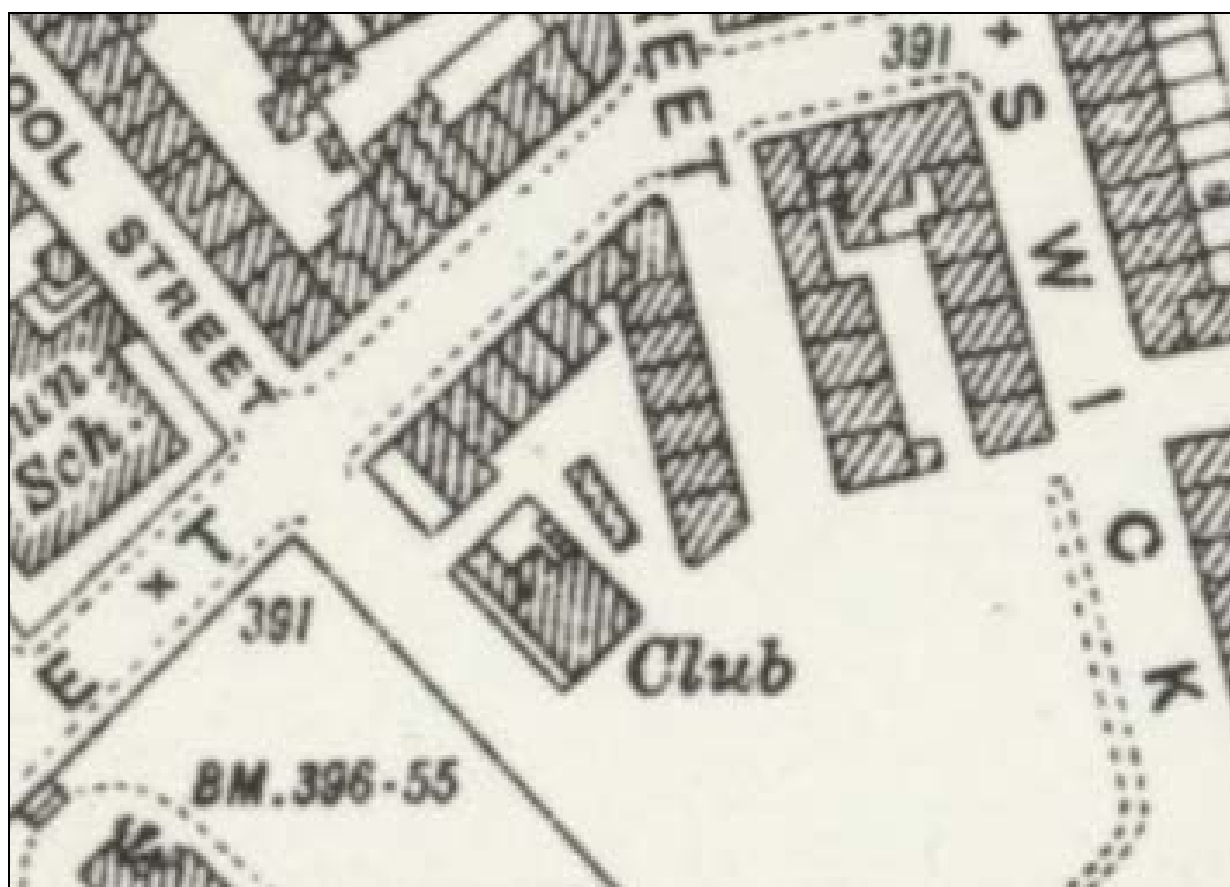
5. Late 19th century houses on St James' Terrace, and workers' houses on Tower Street beyond



6. St James's viewed distantly from the former ropery buildings on Wesley Street

5: THE APPLICATION SITE

Historically the proposal site came to be occupied by a club along with two groups of what appear to be small cottages, one L-shaped, the other of U-plan, as shown on the OS edition of 1937 (Map 4, below). More recently the site contained the Heywood pub until its destruction by fire and subsequent clearance in early 2024. The site is now a bleak, rubble-filled space in close proximity to St James's and which consequently mars its setting.



Map 4. The site as recorded by the 25-inch OS map of 1937



7. The Heywood and St James's, viewed from the Brunswick/Tower Street junction in 2020



8. The present appearance of the site following demolition of the pub

6: SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

6.1 Rationale

Paragraph 201 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 minimise 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 listed building

The Grade II designation of St James's Church denotes it is a building of national importance for its special architectural and historic interest. Its significance essentially derives from this intrinsic special interest: architecturally, it is that of an early Victorian church of 1838 designed in a revivalist Decorated style, while historically it is associated with the early 19th century growth of Heywood and the local mill owners who financed the building. Its setting is no longer the 19th century urban surroundings in which it stood but an altered streetscene in which stand the survivors of the original buildings along with modern development and cleared sites. The contribution of this setting to the significance of the listed building has therefore been diminished by change.

6.3 Contribution of the application site

In its present derelict state, the site harms the setting of the listed building.

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 203 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 205 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 208 states that where harm is considered less than substantial it should be weighed against any public benefits arising from the proposal.

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 proposal is for construction of a total of eleven three/four bedroomed dwellings, which will be arranged in two blocks, one comprising five dwellings fronting Tower Street, with the remainder in a block fronting Brunswick Street. The scheme is fully detailed in the submitted drawings along with the accompanying planning statement.



9. Visualisation of the proposed scheme

8.2 Its effect

It has been established in this report that:

- The importance of the setting of St James's Church to its significance has been diminished as the original 19th century surrounding townscape has been lost
- The site in its present derelict appearance harms the setting of the listed building

The proposal will regenerate what is now an eyesore site and put it to sustainable use for new housing. While the appearance of the site itself will be improved, the scheme

will introduce substantial new built forms into the setting of the listed church and thereby change, to a degree, its setting. However as noted above, the contribution made by this setting to the significance of St James's has been reduced, and therefore the impact of the proposal needs to be considered accordingly. The church is at present a prominent landmark, situated in an elevated position amid relatively open surroundings resulting from site clearance. While the proposal will affect mid-distance views of the church from the east, in the vicinity of Fox Street (e.g. Plate 3), from other viewpoints, such as across open space to the south, and from Wesley Street (Plate 6), views of St James will not be obscured. When viewed from close quarters on Tower Street and St James's Terrace (Plate 2) the new development will recede to a background presence only and appreciation of the listed church and its intrinsic qualities, along with its relationship to the remnants of its 19th century townscape in the form of St James's Terrace and the Sunday School, will be sustained. The proposal's effect on the setting of St James's Church therefore has limitations. Its intrinsic architectural and historic interest will however be entirely unaffected.

8.3 Concluding statement

Given the diminished importance of the listed building's surroundings, and the limited visual impacts noted above, the effect of the proposal translates, in planning terms, into less than substantial harm to its setting and significance. The proposal must therefore be judged in the context of paragraph 208, which states that any harm should be weighed against the public benefits arising from it. The benefits in this case are the regeneration of a previously-developed urban site to provide eleven family houses within an accessible part of the borough, along with the associated gains to the local economy which this entails.

These benefits weigh favourably against the low level of harm to the devalued setting of the listed building and hence the application merits approval on this basis.