

PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF BARN AT SYKE HOUSE

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 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

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CONTENTS

1: Executive Summary	5
2: The Site	7
3: The Proposal/Scope of this Report	9
4: Historical Context	11
5: The Listed Building	14
6: Summary of Significance	22
7: Planning Policy Context	23
8: Impact of the Proposal	24

1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report supports proposed works at the barn at Syke House, Littleborough, in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. Syke House is an isolated moorland farm and the barn and dwelling are attached to form a long range of buildings of gentrified laithehouse form. The barn is listed at Grade II.

An application has been submitted to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for change of use of the listed building, currently used as stables and for storage, to residential/holiday accommodation. The heritage issue arising is the proposal's impact upon the significance (i.e. heritage interest and value) of the listed building. The scope and purpose of this assessment is to identify this significance and to evaluate how it will be affected.

The application building consists of a barn and shippon at its eastern end, adjoining the house, followed by a stable block. These elements are dated 1758 but may be earlier in parts. The stable was gentrified in the mid-19th century, and a smaller stable added at the western end in the later 19th century. The house, which is unaffected by the application, dates from the mid-19th century, probably replacing an earlier building.

The Grade II designation of the application building denotes it is of national importance for its special architectural and historic interest. Its significance essentially derives from this intrinsic special interest, and can be summarised as follows:

- For its architectural and historic qualities as an element of a moorland laithehouse of mid-18th century or earlier date that was subsequently gentrified in the mid-19th century
- The intricacies of its evolution, beginning with the original build of 1758 (which itself may have been the alteration of an earlier structure), remodelling to create the stables in the mid-19th century and the addition of the western stable in the later 19th century
- Its historical association with the Butterworth yeoman family
- Its isolated setting within surrounding Pennine moorland

This significance is embodied within the various elements which belong to its respective building periods but, owing to alteration of the interior, primarily its external envelope. Various later alterations, such as late 20th century stalls and other interior fittings, are not representative of its core qualities and hence are of low significance in relative terms.

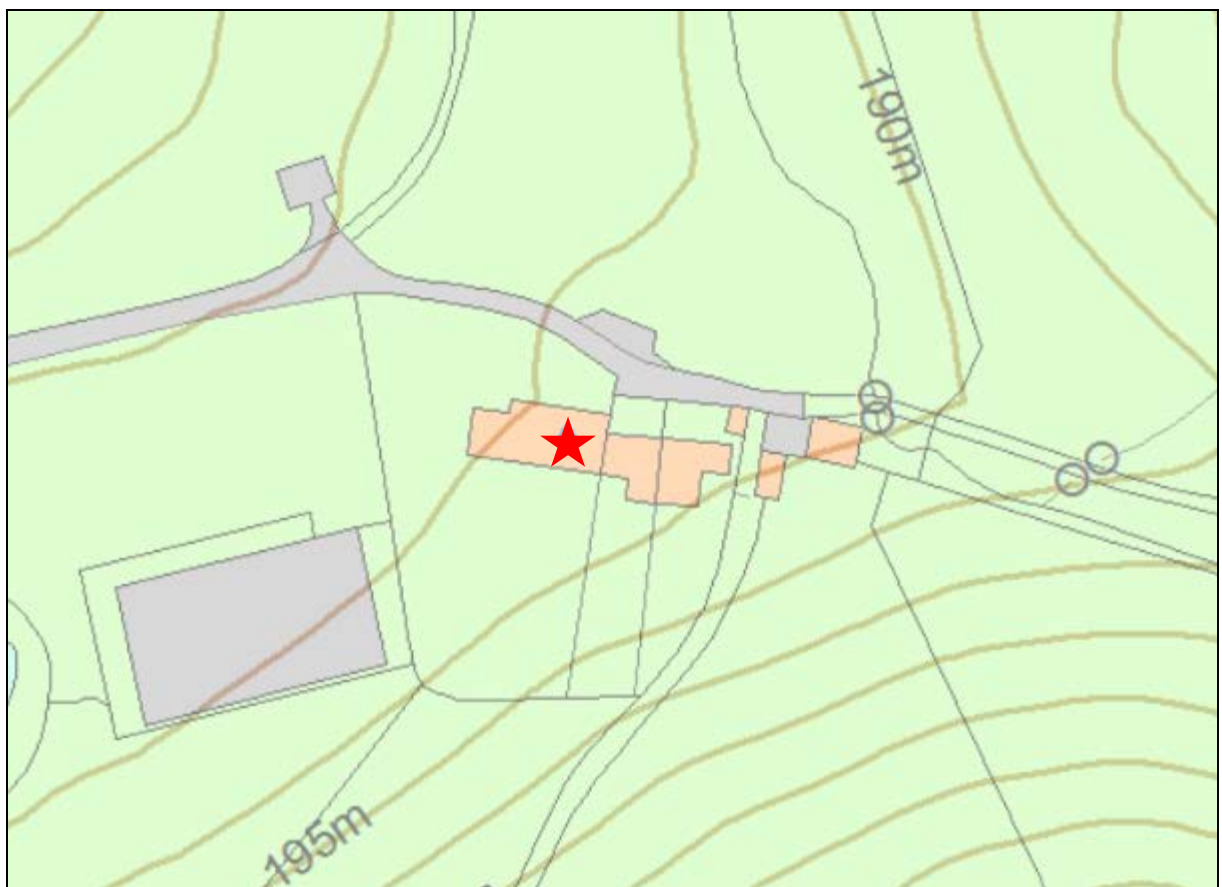
The proposal seeks consent for conversion of the main element of the barn to a residential dwelling; conversion of the western stable to a holiday annexe; and extension and conversion of a freestanding adjacent outbuilding to a small holiday let.

There is no heritage consideration in respect of the latter as this is a late 20th century structure.

As detailed in this report, the proposal will put the under-used listed building to sustainable use that will secure its future and the works will have no adverse effect upon the special architectural or historical interest that is the core of its significance. The proposal is thus entirely in accordance with the requirements of national planning guidance along with the local development plan. It is therefore concluded that the scheme merits approval without delay.

2: THE SITE

The application building is the barn at Syke House, an isolated moorland farm at Littleborough in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. Syke House and the barn are attached and form a long range of buildings located at the end of Syke Road, a winding track crossing the hillside east of and above Hollingworth Lake. The barn is a large two-storeyed structure of 18th and 19th century date, adjoined by a freestanding late 20th century single-storey outbuilding. The buildings are currently used as stables and for storage. The house itself, which is of the mid-19th century, is unaffected by the application.



Map 1. Location of the application property (Historic England mapping)



1. The application property, looking east



2. Aerial view showing the barn (indicated) and house attached to the left

3: THE PROPOSAL/SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

3.1 Designations

The application property is listed at Grade II, having been first designated in 1986. The listing identifies the building as *Barn, Shippon and Workshop adjoining west of Syke House and Farmhouse*.

3.2 The proposal

An application has been submitted to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for conversion of the application building to residential and holiday use.

3.3 Heritage impact

The heritage consideration arising is therefore the impact upon the significance (heritage interest and value to this and future generations) of the listed building.

3.4 Purpose of this report

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

3.5 Report structure

This is as follows:

1. A short account of the historical background relating to the site (Section 4) and a description of the listed building (Section 5)
2. A summary of its heritage significance (Section 6)
3. A summary of the relevant heritage planning policies against which the application will be assessed (Section 7)
4. Analysis within this context of the impact of the proposal upon the significance of the listed building (Section 8).

4: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

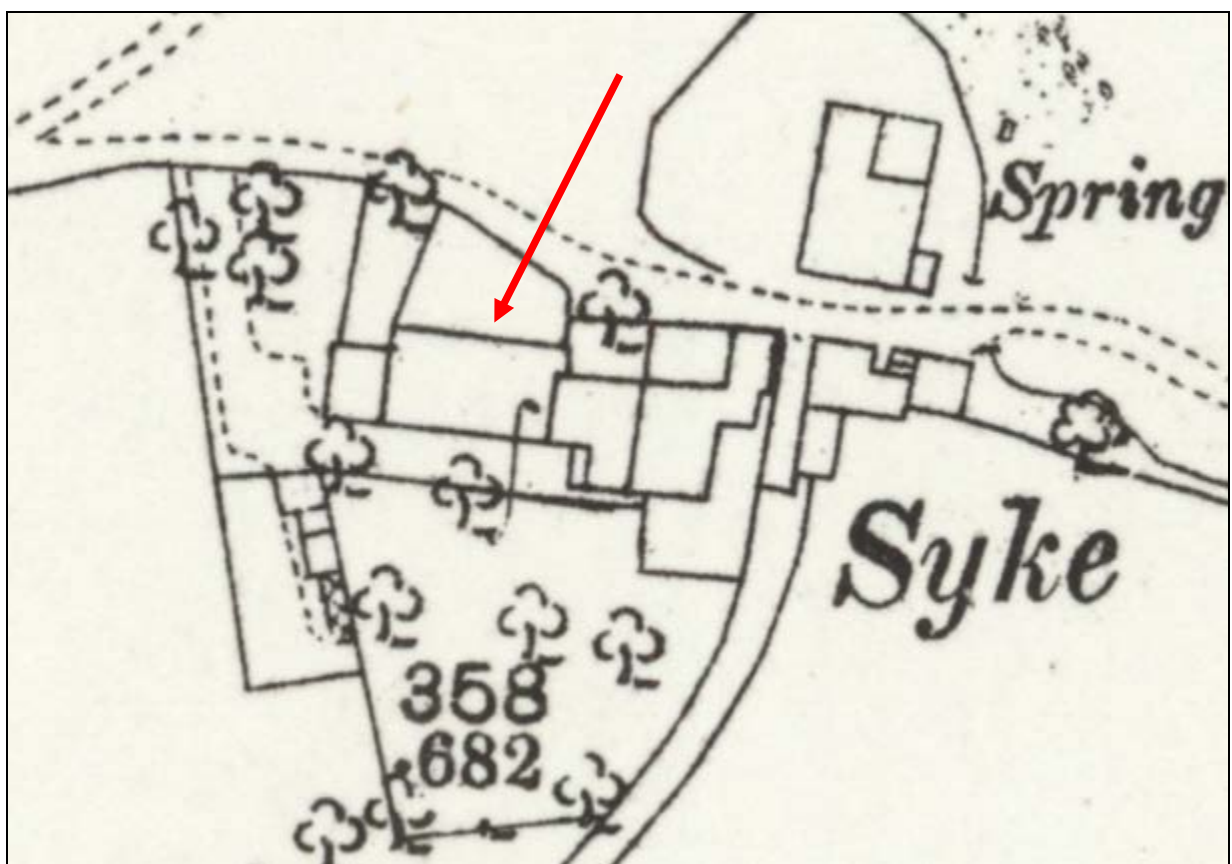
The site is of 18th century or earlier origin and was associated with the Butterworth family: the name of James Butterworth, yeoman, appears in an indenture of 1735 kept at the house. His initials appear on a datestone of 1758 formerly on the end wall of the barn, but which is now internal following addition of a further stable at the western end in the later 19th century. The property is likely always to have been of *laithehouse* type, with house and barn attached as they are now, but the house element was rebuilt and gentrified in the mid-19th century. The OS six-inch mapping of the mid-1840s (Map 2, following page) shows the barn at that time occupied a more irregular plan than now, but had adopted its present form by the early 1890s (Map 3).



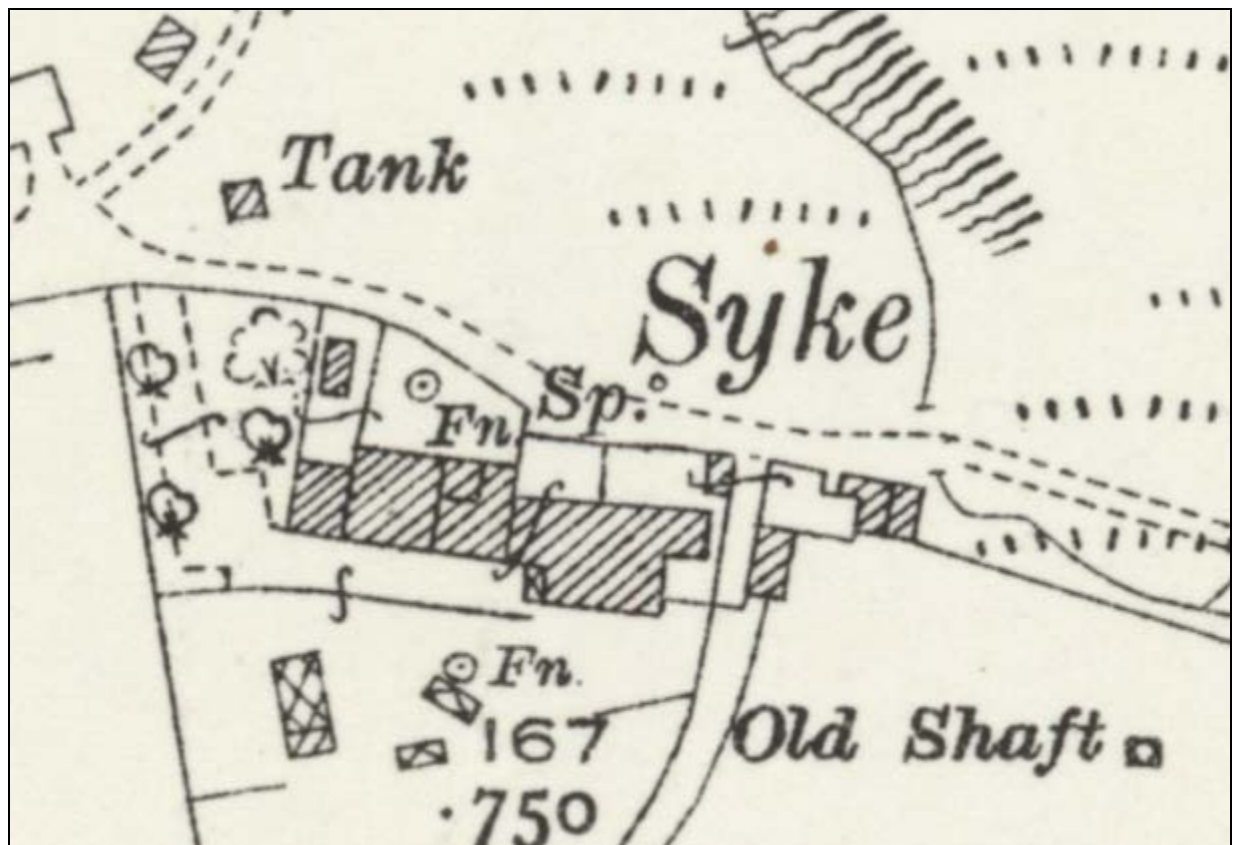
3. Datestone of 1758 – incorporating an owl hole – on former west outer wall of the barn



Map 2. The barn occupies a more irregular footprint on the six-inch OS map of 1847-1848



Map 3. By 1891 the building had acquired its present form, with the western stable added



Map 4. Little change is shown by the OS 25-inch edition of 1928



4. The house was rebuilt in the mid-19th century

5: THE LISTED BUILDING

5.1 Overview

Mid-18th century or earlier barn and shippon with stables alterations/extensions of the mid and later 19th century.

5.2 Elements of the building

The property comprises three distinct elements:

- 1** The original barn/shippon at the east end of the structure and adjoining the house. This is dated 1758 but may incorporate earlier work
- 2** The stable, a mid-19th century remodelling of the western end of the 1758 building
- 3** A smaller western stable, an addition of the later 19th century



5. Elements of the building

5.3 List description

The National Heritage List for England description of the property, compiled at the time of designation, reads:

Shippon, barn and former workshop. Early C19. Hammer-dressed watershot stone with graduated stone slate roof. Barn and shippon (left) were added to by 3 bays and 2 storeys and again later by another bay. The barn has opposed segmental- arched cart entries with keystones and a circular window above. It is separated from the shippon door by a window with round-arched head. The 3-bay workshop has a central door with square-cut stone surround and segmental-arched head flanked by windows with wedge lintels. The upper floor and the gable feature to the central bay have semi-circular- arched window openings with dropped keystones. The added bay to right has a door on ground floor, a similar first floor window and a hipped roof. The rear is treated similarly except that there is no gable over the centre bay and the door has a dressed surround. Walls and a cast-iron fence enclose the front yard. It is unlikely that a building with such architectural pretensions was built entirely for farming purposes. The workshop was possibly built to process limestone for farming and other purposes which could have been brought from glacial deposits in the north in a raw state. The cast-iron trough in the front enclosure may have been a horse-powered lime press.

5.4 Further analysis

- a. **Date.** While the list description states that the bays beyond the barn are an addition, this is incorrect owing to the datestone of 1758, which confirms that the entire building was – with the exception of the added west stable – of this date originally. The interior was not examined at the time of listing, hence the datestone remained, until now, unknown. However it is possible that it in parts the building pre-dates 1758, as a property is referred to in the 1735 indenture. The barn and shippon may be a remnant of an earlier phase as they are demarcated by quoins on the rear elevation and the rear shippon entrance has a lintel inscribed with initials but no date. The bays west of the barn – described as the workshop in the listing – were rebuilt in the mid-19th century to create their present appearance. The western stable is of the later 19th century.
- b. **Function.** The list description suggests that what it described as the workshop was used for industrial purposes. This is by no means certain; the building most likely underwent a gentrification to create a prestigious stable block. The opposed doorways in the front and rear elevation and through-passage within would suit a stable use. Also, the 1929 mapping shows a fountain to the front, whose presence would have been unlikely if the building was in industrial use.
- c. **Exterior.** Quoins on the rear elevation, west of the barn wagon entrance have already been referred to, as has the shippon door on the same elevation, which carries the initials
I
B F

A notable recent change is that a gable – absent in the 1986 list description – has been added on the rear elevation to match that on the front elevation.

d. Interior.

- i. **Main building.** The ground floor is mostly used for stabling/storage while the upper floors are vacant. The exception is the barn area, whose former threshing floor between the wagon doors is open to the roof and contains a modern timber stair to the loft. The stalls in the main building are all late 20th century. A notable feature is that the loft floor is supported on re-used steel beams (with vacant joist housings) and columns. The latter are sited in the stable through-passage and hence the arrangement is certainly not original. The structures were probably imported from a mill or similar industrial building. The loft contains three roof trusses of queen-strut form. All are machine cut, and therefore later than 1758. The easternmost, adjoining the threshing floor, appears the oldest, while the remainder have timbers of a rather fresh appearance which suggests their date is relatively recent.
- ii. **Western stable.** The ground floor contains remnants of original stalls of good quality, suggesting they were used for carriage rather than working horses. The loft above, accessed from the main barn, has a half-truss forming the hipped roof at this end.



6. The western end of the barn was rebuilt as a gentrified stable in the mid-19th century



7. Rear elevation: gable is a modern addition



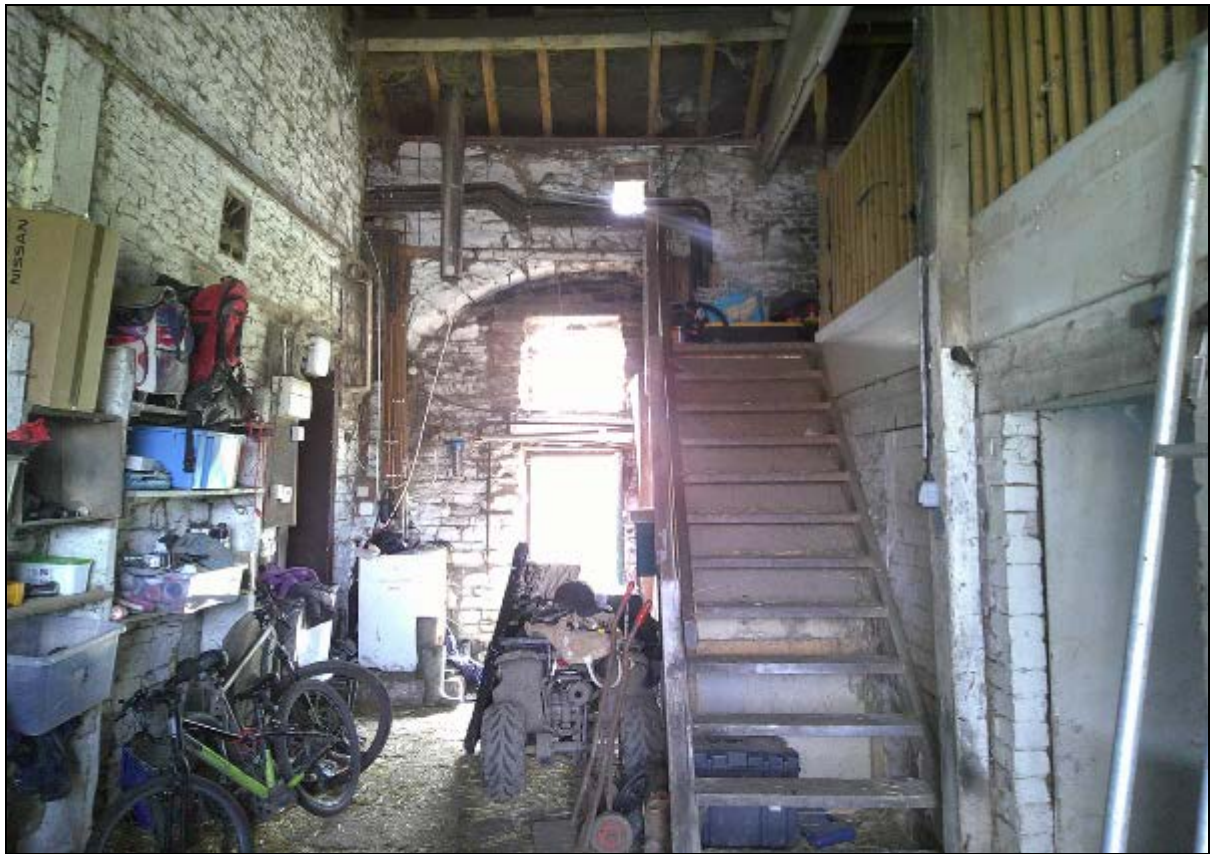
8. The barn and shippon element may pre-date 1758



9. Initials, but no date, on the shippon lintel



10. The western stable, later 19th century, and adjoining modern outbuilding



11. Threshing floor of the barn, looking to rear, with modern stair to loft



12. Interior of the shippon



13. Through-passage of stables, with later, ex-situ, steel columns



14. Roof trusses over stables are not the original



15. Stalls in the western stable; original ones to rear



16. Half truss in loft over western shippon

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 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 the application building denotes it is of national importance for its special architectural and historic interest. Its significance essentially derives from this intrinsic special interest, and can be summarised as follows:

- For its architectural and historic qualities as a moorland barn belonging to a laithouse of mid-18th century or earlier date that was subsequently gentrified in the mid-19th century
- The intricacies of its evolution, beginning with the original build of 1758 (which itself may have been the alteration of an earlier structure), remodelling to create the stables in the mid-19th century and the addition of the western stables in the later 19th century
- Its historical association with the Butterworth yeoman family
- Its isolated setting within surrounding Pennine moorland

This significance is embodied within the various elements which belong to its respective building periods and, owing to alteration of the interior, primarily its external envelope. The various later alterations, such as the late 20th century stables and other interior fittings, are not representative of its core qualities and hence are of low significance in relative terms.

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 the statutory duties are 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; and 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.

The relevant local planning policy relating to the present application is Policy P2 (Protecting and Enhancing Character, Landscape and Heritage) of the Rochdale Core Strategy, which was formally adopted on October 19, 2016. Part 2a states that key heritage assets, both statutory and non-statutory, will be conserved, enhanced and promoted, including consideration of their wider settings.

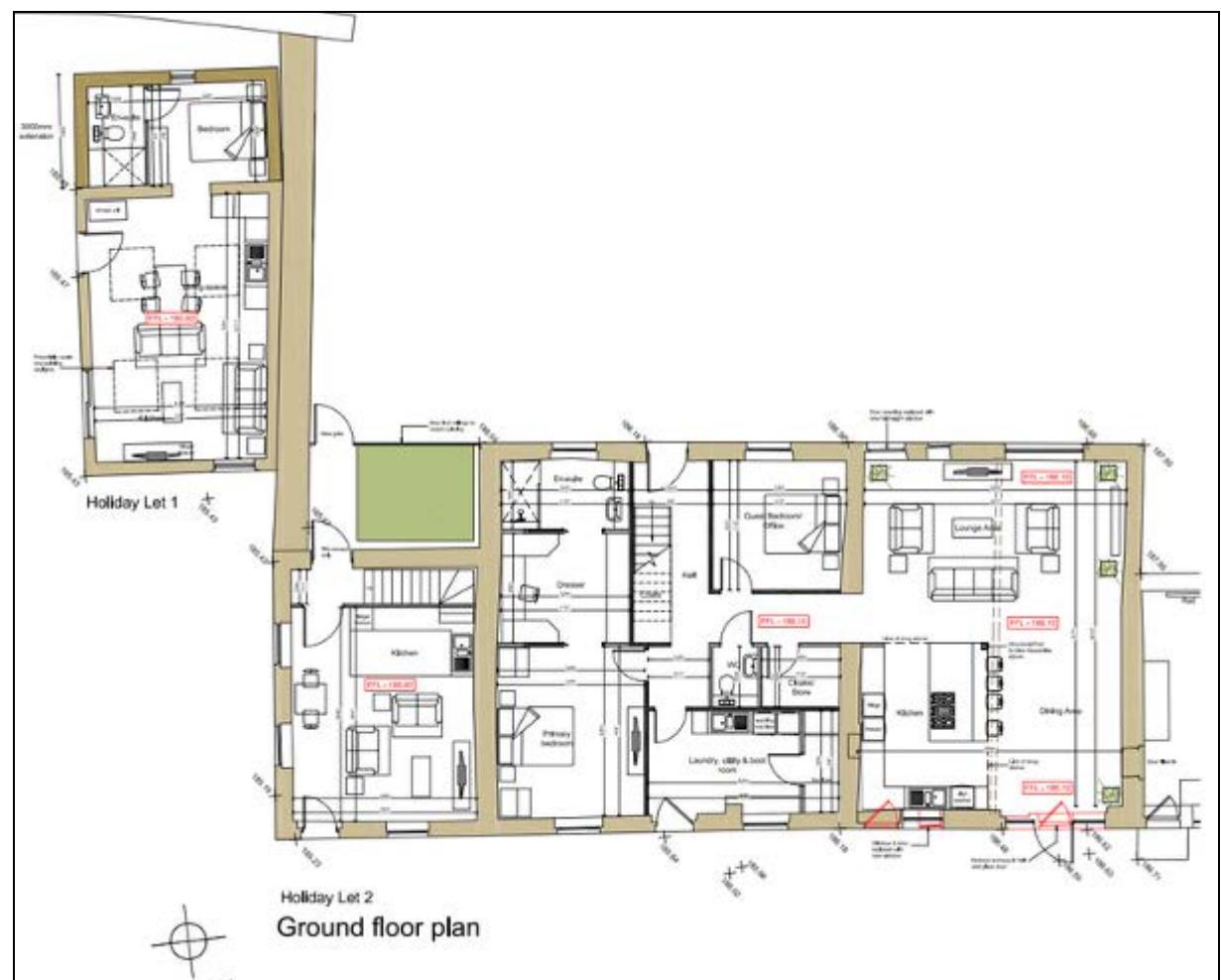
8: IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL

8.1 Summary of the works

The proposal seeks consent for conversion of the main element of the barn to a residential dwelling; conversion of the western stable to a holiday annexe; and extension and conversion of the outbuilding to a small holiday let. There is no heritage consideration in respect of the latter as this is a late 20th century structure.

8.2 Effect

- a. **Principle of the scheme.** The listed building is at present considerably under-used. The proposal will put the building to an active and sustainable use and is therefore favourable in this respect.
- b. **External works.** It has been demonstrated in this report that the significance of the listed building is primarily embodied in its external envelope. This will remain largely unaltered by the proposal. The only works are the reopening of the blocked rear wagon entrance, which represents an enhancement as it reinstates its original appearance; and conversion of the shippon doors to windows. The effect of the latter will not be adverse as they will continue to be read as original doorways.
- c. **Internal works.** By the nature of the scheme, the works will involve inevitable changes to the present interior arrangement of the building and the loss of the present stalls, all of which, apart from some in the western stable, are modern. The crosswalls that define the main spaces will remain however, as will the 1758 datestone. The roof trusses will be subject to alteration though, as detailed in the submitted drawings, in order to create sufficient headroom to make the first floor usable. Given that the trusses are not original, and considerably later than the 1758 date of this part of the barn, the effect of this is not considered to be adverse. If however the local authority's conservation officer were to consider it harmful, then any perceived harm would be low and significantly outweighed by putting the building to active and sustainable use.



17. Ground floor as proposed



18. Proposed rear elevation, showing the glazed wagon entrance

8.3 Concluding statement

The proposal will put the under-used listed building to sustainable use that will secure its future and the works involved will have no adverse effect upon the special architectural or historical interest that is the core of its significance. The proposal is thus entirely in accordance with the guidance contained in paragraphs 197 and 199 of the NPPF, and with local plan policy P2. It is concluded therefore that the scheme merits approval without delay.