

PROPOSED EXTENSIONS AT SHEEP BANK FARM

LITTLEBOROUGH, METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ROCHDALE



HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

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MARCH 2025

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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: March 2025

Purpose: for planning submission

Text: Garry Miller

Site survey: Peter Miller

CONTENTS

1: Executive Summary	5
2: The Site	6
3: The Proposal/Scope of this Report	8
4: The Application Property	10
5: Significance of the Application Property	15
6: Planning Policy Context	16
7: Impact of the Proposal	17

1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report supports proposed works at Sheep Bank Farm, Littleborough, in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. The property is an isolated farmstead, now private residence, located off Whittaker Lane amid open moorland southeast of the town centre. Sheep Bank Farm is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council.

Proposals have been submitted to Rochdale MBC for extensions and other works at the application property. The heritage consideration arising is the potential impact upon the significance (i.e. heritage interest and value) of the application building. The scope and purpose of this report is to identify this significance and how the proposal affects it.

The property is significant for its architectural and historic interest in the local context as a Pennine farmhouse of early 19th century date incorporating late 17th century remains. Together with its adjacent barn, its forms a rugged moorland group that testifies to the combination of farming and textile production – the latter demonstrated by a long weaver's window in the house – that characterised the local economy at that time. The architectural interest of the building has however been compromised by alteration over time and its significance is now primarily embodied in its external envelope. In relative terms, the significance of the building, as it is a non-designated heritage asset, is low.

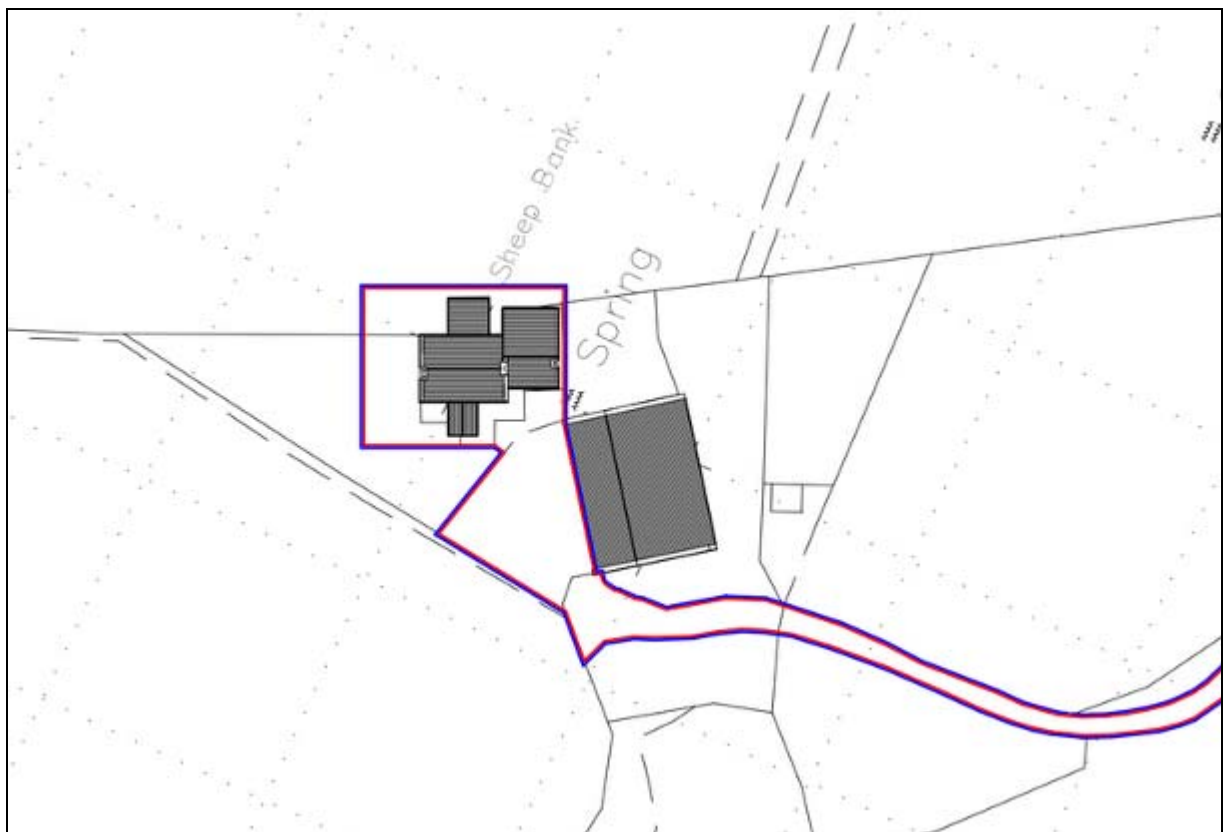
The application seeks consent for a two-storey extension at the north side of the property, replacement and extension of an existing rear outshut, a replacement porch and works relating to some of the windows.

As the property is a non-designated heritage asset, national planning guidance requires simply a balanced planning judgement on the proposal, as opposed to those affecting designated assets, where there is a requirement to at least preserve their significance. As examined in this report, in making this balanced judgment, the present proposals should be considered favourable as the works will essentially preserve, and in some aspects enhance, the significance and appearance of the non-designated building.

The application should therefore be determined positively for these reasons.

2: THE SITE

The application property is is Sheep Bank Farm, Littleborough, in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. The property is an isolated farmstead, now private residence, located off Whittaker Lane amid open moorland southeast of the town centre and consists of a house and adjacent barn. The proposed works affect the house only.



Map 1. Location of the application building



1. The application property, Sheep Bank Farm



2: The farmstead in its isolated moorland setting

3: THE PROPOSAL/SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

3.1 Proposed development

Proposals have been submitted to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council for extensions and other works at the application property.

3.2 Designation

The property is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council.

3.3 Heritage impact

The heritage consideration arising from the proposal is its potential impact upon the significance (i.e. heritage interest and value) of the non-designated application building.

3.4 Scope and purpose of this report

Paragraph 207 of Chapter 16 (*Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*) the National Planning Policy Framework (as revised, December 2024) 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 application building, and to assess how this will be affected by the proposal.

In accordance with paragraph 207, 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.

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

4: THE APPLICATION PROPERTY

4.1 Overview

Probably early 19th century remodelling of earlier farmhouse, with subsequent alteration.

4.2 Historical summary

The site's origins date back probably to the later 17th century as the house incorporates the remnant of a building of this date in its south wing. The main body of the house dates probably from the early 19th century and a long, partly-blocked first floor mullioned 'weaver's window' testifies that its occupants were engaged in both farming and textiles, typical of the dual economy that existed in Pennine districts at this time. They may also have been involved in coal mining, as the OS map of 1847-1848 (below) shows two pits nearby. The map also shows the layout of the farmstead has altered little since then. The 1908 OS edition (following page) records that the present house was subdivided to form two properties.



The farmstead as depicted by the six-inch OS map surveyed 1847-1848, with the house indicated:



The 25-inch OS edition of 1908 shows the house was then subdivided

4.3 Present appearance

The property is a modest, two-storey farmhouse built on an approximate L-plan that consists of two main elements of different building date along with later alterations and additions. The oldest is a narrow wing to the south, which has mullioned windows and is probably of late 17th century date. This has been heightened to the rear, probably when the adjoining main block was added. The latter projects forward and is two bays wide with a single-storey outshut at the rear, blank apart from a small window. It is probably of the early 19th century, but the outshut is likely to be somewhat later. The originally full-width first floor weaver's window is the main block's principal distinguishing feature. On the ground floor are formerly-mullioned windows either side of a single-storey porch. All windows now have modern frames. The porch itself appears to be a later addition, and conceals a fine moulded door surround with arched head that appears to have been reused from the original 17th century house. The rest of the interior of the main block is of no particular interest; a machine-cut kingpost truss confirms its likely early 19th century date. A lack of communication that still remains internally between the main block and south wing confirms the subdivision shown on the 1908 map.



The main block is a rebuilding of the early 19th century



The first floor weavers' window was originally full-length



Porch is probably a later addition



Rear, showing single-storey outshut, again probably later



Late 17th century door surround concealed by the porch



The machine-cut roof truss in the main block confirms an early 19th century rebuilding date

5: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE APPLICATION PROPERTY

5.1 Rationale

Paragraph 208 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.

5.2 Summary

The property is significant for its architectural and historic interest in the local context as a Pennine farmhouse of early 19th century date incorporating late 17th century remains. Together with its adjacent barn, it forms a rugged moorland group that testifies to the combination of farming and textile production – the latter demonstrated by the long weaver's window in the house – that characterised the local economy at that time. The architectural interest of the building has however been compromised by alteration over time and its significance is primarily embodied in its external envelope. In relative terms, the significance of the building, as it is a non-designated heritage asset, is low.

6: PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides the guidance on how applications affecting the historic environment are to be determined. Paragraph 210 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*

In the case of non-designated heritage assets, paragraph 216 requires simply a balanced planning judgment that weighs any harm or loss against the significance of the 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.

7: IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL

7.1 Summary of the scheme

The application seeks consent for a two-storey extension at the north side of the property, replacement and extension of the existing rear outshut, a replacement porch and works relating to some of the windows. The submitted drawings should be consulted for the full details of the proposal.



Elevations as proposed

7.2 Its effect

- a. **Proposed north extension.** This is designed to be subservient to the main building, being of lower height and stepped back from its frontage. Its materials and appearance reflect those of the original building, and is thus in keeping with its character as a rugged moorland farmstead. The proposed extension will have no adverse effect in this respect.

- b. Replacement of the outshut.** The existing outshut is not of any particular interest in itself and appears to be a later addition. Its replacement, and elongation to meet the side extension, is not considered harmful on these grounds.
- c. Replacement of the porch.** The existing porch is also most likely an addition also and has the effect of obscuring the re-used 17th century door surround. The proposed porch delivers the benefit of better revealing the door surround owing to the glass panels incorporated in the design, and its effect will therefore be positive.
- d. Windows.** In the south wing, the existing windows are to be replaced with new white-painted timber windows, on a like-for-like basis and retaining the mullions, which will enhance its appearance. A former window will be reinstated at the rear of the main block, above the outshut, which will also have a positive effect. Two new windows, in a style matching the existing, will be created on the rear of the wing, increasing the amount of natural light within. Placed in context, this represents a minor change that should not be seen as harmful.

7.3 Concluding statement

As the property is a non-designated heritage asset, national planning guidance requires simply a balanced planning judgement on the proposal, as opposed to those affecting designated assets, where there is a requirement to at least preserve their significance. In making this balanced judgment, the present proposal should be considered favourable as the works will essentially preserve, and in some aspects enhance, the significance and appearance of the non-designated building.

The proposal should therefore be determined positively for these reasons.