

PROPOSED EXTENSION AT BREARLEY FARM

LITTLEBOROUGH, METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ROCHDALE



HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

GARRY MILLER *HERITAGE CONSULTANCY*

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DECEMBER 2025

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Providing heritage planning advice since 2002

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Garry Miller is a heritage advisor, 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 2025

Purpose: for planning submission

Text: Garry Miller

Photographic survey: Peter Miller

IMPORTANT LEGAL ADVISORY

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1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report supports proposed works at Brearley Farm, Littleborough, in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. The property is an isolated farmstead, now private residence, located amid open moorland off Rakehead Road and consists of a house and attached converted barn. Brearley Farm is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council.

Proposals have been submitted to Rochdale MBC for a single storey extension extension on the west elevation of the barn. 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.

In relative terms, the significance of the building, as a non-designated heritage asset, is low. This significance extends to the local context only and derives from its architectural and historic interest as a Pennine farmstead comprising a late 18th century house (originally two cottages) and rebuilt barn of 1829. Together they form a rugged moorland structure that testifies historically to the combination of farming and textile production that characterised the local economy at that time. The architectural interest of the building is primarily embodied in its external envelope, but in respect of the barn this has been significantly devalued as it no longer represents its original appearance following conversion works consented in 2007.

It is demonstrated in this report that an extension was added on the west side of the barn by 1908, and which survived until at least the 1960s and was probably of single-storey lean-to form. The proposed extension is to be built on the site of this addition, on a slightly larger footprint. It is of modest, subservient scale and a contemporary appearance which is entirely honest and appropriate in its design approach as it allows it to be clearly distinguished from the original building. The proposed extension will therefore not detract from or obscure the interest, character and legibility of the host building as a historic moorland farmstead.

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 preserve their significance. In making this balanced judgment, the present proposal should be considered favourable as the works will sustain the local significance of the non-designated building.

The proposal therefore merits positive determination without delay.

2: THE SITE

The application property is Brearley Farm, Littleborough, in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. The property is a former farmstead, now private residence, located in an isolated setting amid moorland east of Rakewood Road and consists of a house and attached former barn, both of which have been altered in recent times.



Location of the application building



The application property, Brearley Farm



The farmstead in its isolated moorland setting

3: THE PROPOSAL/SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

Proposed development

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

Designation

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

Heritage impact

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

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.

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

Overview

House, originally two cottages, probably of the late 18th century with attached altered barn of 1829.

Historical summary

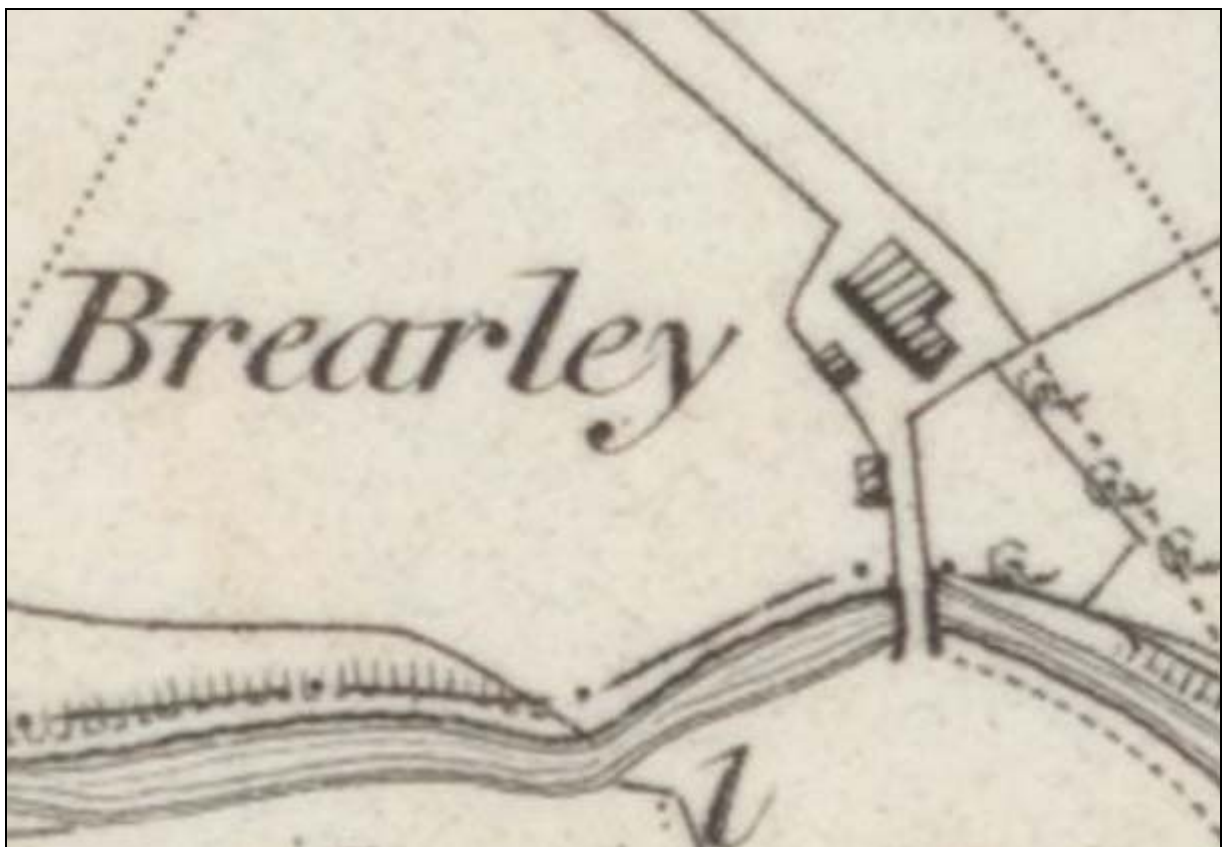
Brearley Farm is a *laithe house*, a building with house and barn attached that is typical of Pennine moorland districts. The appearance of the house suggests it dates from the late 18th century: it was originally two cottages as shown by an early 20th century photograph (below). A long, partly-blocked 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. As the window extends across the full width of the building, it suggests the entire first floor functioned as a loomshop. The barn is later, dated 1829, and probably a rebuilding or enlargement of a structure that existed previously. Historic mapping shows that a short extension (probably a lean-to) was added to the barn between 1891 and 1906, and which remained until the 1960s at least.



The property as recorded by an early 20th century photograph



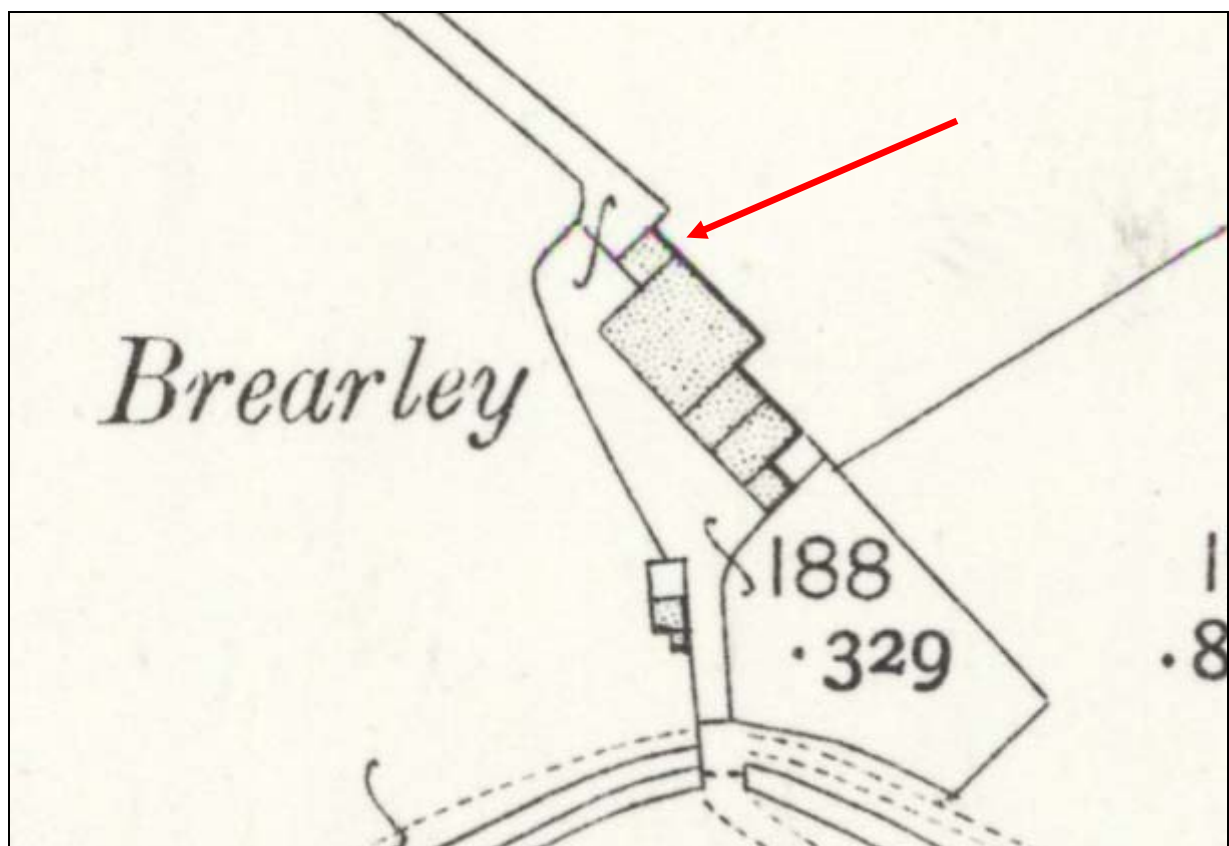
Relocated 1829 datestone on the barn



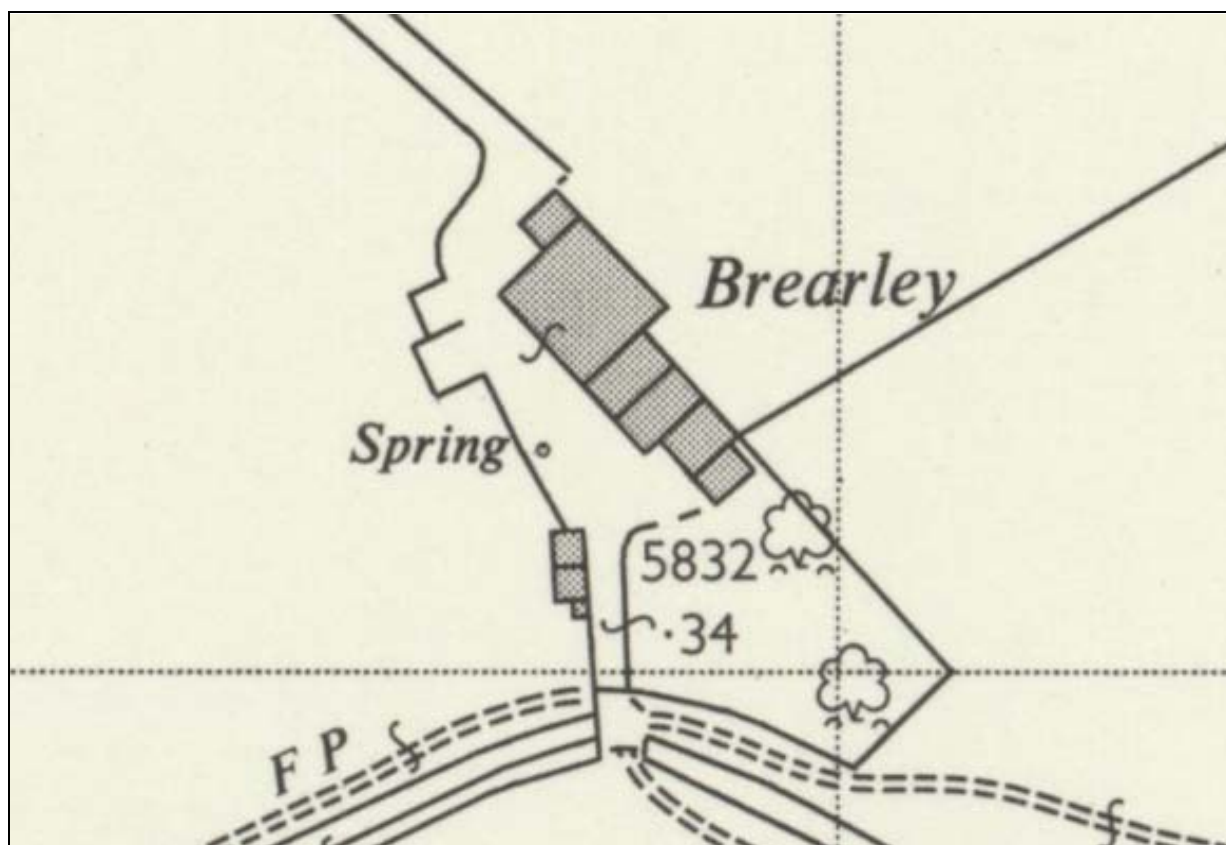
The farmstead as depicted by the six-inch OS map surveyed 1847-1848



Little change is indicated by the 25-inch OS edition of 1891



The edition of 1908 shows a small addition to the barn



This remained at the time of the 1962 1:2500 edition, by which time additions had also been made to the house

Present appearance

The house is a modest, two-storey building of a rugged, functional appearance typical of Pennine farmsteads. Its original role as two cottages is evident in the paired entrances, now beneath a modern porch. The long mullioned first floor windows mentioned earlier, signifying a loomshop within, is similar to that at nearby Sheep Bank Farm, a property of similar date. At the rear is a single-storey modern extension consented in 2010. The barn has been altered considerably from its original appearance under a consent granted in 2007 (reference 07/D49073), most notably with a taller wagon entrance on the front elevation than the one previously existing, along with new window openings in what was previously blank walling. A similar wagon entrance is the main feature of the rear elevation, while the west elevation looks to have been entirely rebuilt as there is no evidence of the former lean-to: windows have been inserted and the datestone relocated there.



Front elevation of the house, with its former cottage doors and first floor weaver's window



The rear extension to the house was approved in 2010



The barn has been significantly altered: compare with the early 20th century image





The west side elevation looks to have been entirely rebuilt under the 2007 consent

5: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE APPLICATION PROPERTY

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.

Summary

In relative terms, the significance of the building, as a non-designated heritage asset, is low. This significance extends to the local context only and derives from its architectural and historic interest as a Pennine farmstead comprising a late 18th century house (originally two cottages) and rebuilt barn of 1829. Together they form a rugged moorland structure that testifies historically 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 is primarily embodied in its external envelope, but in respect of the barn this has been significantly devalued as it no longer represents its original appearance following the 2007 works.

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. Also relevant is policy JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan 2022-2029, adopted March 21, 2024, which requires (inter alia) that the heritage significance of a site or area is considered in accordance with national policy in the planning and design process; and integrating the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings, with creative contextual architectural responses that contribute to their significance and sense of place.

7: IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL

Summary of the scheme

The application seeks consent for a modest single-storey extension on the side elevation of the barn, as detailed in the submitted drawings.



Elevations as proposed

Its effect

It has been demonstrated in this report that an extension was made on the west side of the barn by 1908 that survived until at least the 1960s and was probably of single-storey lean-to form. The proposed extension is to be built on the site of this addition, on a slightly larger footprint. The extension is of a modest, subservient scale and of a contemporary appearance that is entirely honest and appropriate in its design approach as it allows it to be clearly distinguished from the original building. The proposed

extension will therefore not detract from or obscure the interest, character and legibility of the host building as a historic moorland farmstead.

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 preserve their significance. In making this balanced judgment, the present proposal should be considered favourable as the works will sustain the local significance of the non-designated building.

The proposal therefore merits positive determination without delay.