

PROPOSED OUTBUILDING AT LEACHES FARM

HEYWOOD, METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ROCHDALE



HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

GARRY MILLER HERITAGE CONSULTANCY

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AUGUST 2026

GARRY MILLER HERITAGE CONSULTANCY

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

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IMPORTANT LEGAL ADVISORY

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1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report supports proposed works at Leaches Farm, Ashworth Road, Heywood, in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. The property is an isolated farmstead located amid the Pennine moorlands between Rochdale and Bury, and consists of a farmhouse and attached barn in separate occupation.

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

Proposals have been submitted to Rochdale MBC for a one-and-half storey outbuilding to the east of the farmhouse, replacing an existing modern outbuilding. The heritage consideration arising is the potential impact upon the setting and therefore the significance (i.e. heritage interest and value to present and future generations) of the non-designated building. The scope and purpose of this report is to identify this significance and assess the impact of the works upon it.

The significance of Leaches Farm as a non-designated building derives from its architectural and historic interest – in the local context only – as a rugged Pennine farmhouse and attached barn of mid 18th century date that was the principal building in of an isolated moorland nucleus. Its panoramic upland setting makes an important contribution to its significance as it places the building within its historic, little-altered surroundings. Within this setting, the existing outbuilding, as a modern structure, has no heritage value.

The proposed structure is designed in a manner of an agricultural outbuilding and contains a garage for three cars on the ground floor with a study in the loft above. In terms of its scale and appearance, the proposed outbuilding will be subservient to the house and distinctly separate from it. Materiality is in the main traditional and typical of what could be found in an agricultural building. The outbuilding will therefore not distract or detract from Leaches Farm, which will remain entirely legible as a historic farmstead within the wider moorland surroundings which make the principal contribution to its setting. Its role as the principal building of the site will not be diminished, and its intrinsic interest entirely unaffected. As regards its immediate setting, this has experienced notable change in recent decades with substantial additions and extensions to the built group. The proposed outbuilding will have a considerably lesser presence within the site than these previously-consented developments.

Under national guidance, works to non-designated heritage assets require simply a balanced planning judgment, without the requirement to preserve or enhance that applies to listed buildings. In making this balanced judgment, it should be concluded that the works will have no harmful effect and will preserve the significance and legibility of Leaches Farm as the main element of a moorland farming nucleus. There is no heritage reason why it should be refused and therefore the proposal should be determined favourably without delay.

2: THE SITE

The application site 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 property consists of a farmhouse and attached barn (in separate occupation) and the proposal relates to the site of a modern outbuilding east of the house.



The application site

3: THE PROPOSAL/SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

Heritage designation

Leaches Farm is considered in planning terms to be a non-designated heritage asset by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council.

The application

Proposals have been submitted to Rochdale MBC for a one-and-half storey outbuilding to the east of the farmhouse, replacing an existing modern outbuilding.

Heritage impact

The heritage consideration arising is the potential impact upon the setting and therefore the significance (i.e. heritage interest and value to present and future generations) of the non-designated building.

Scope and purpose of this report

Paragraph 207 of Chapter 16 (*Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*) of the National Planning Policy Framework (as revised December 2024) states local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected, including the contribution made by their setting. The scope and purpose of this report is therefore to identify the significance of the non-designated proposal building and to assess the impact of the proposal upon it.

In accordance with paragraph 207, it is considered the level of detail is proportionate to the importance of the proposal building and no more than is necessary to understand the impact of the proposal.

This report is to be read in conjunction with other documentation submitted in support of the proposal.

Report structure

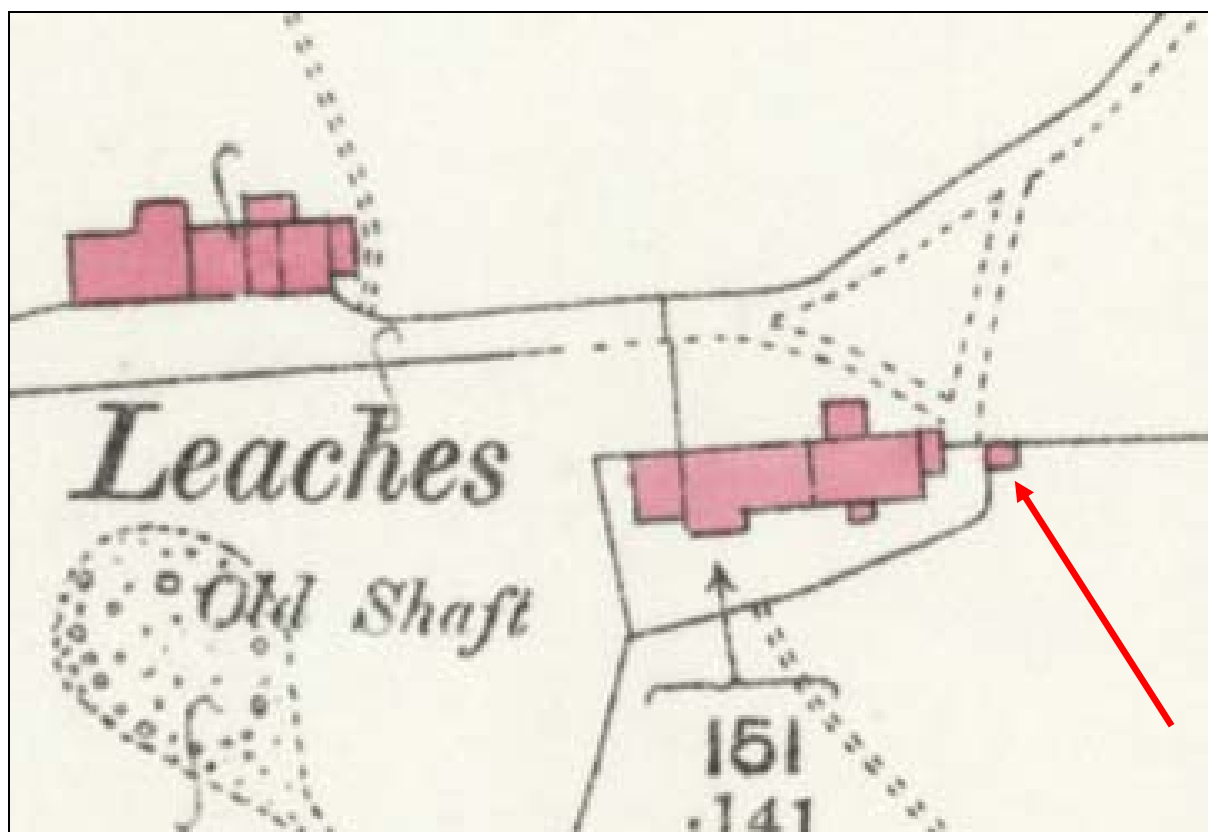
- A concise and proportionate summary of the historical background of the site (Section 4) and description of the non-designated building and its setting (Section 5)
- A summary of its heritage significance (Section 6)
- A review of the national and local heritage policies against which the proposal will be assessed (Section 7)
- Analysis within this policy context of the proposal's impact upon the significance of the non-designated building (Section 8)

4: HISTORICAL SUMMARY

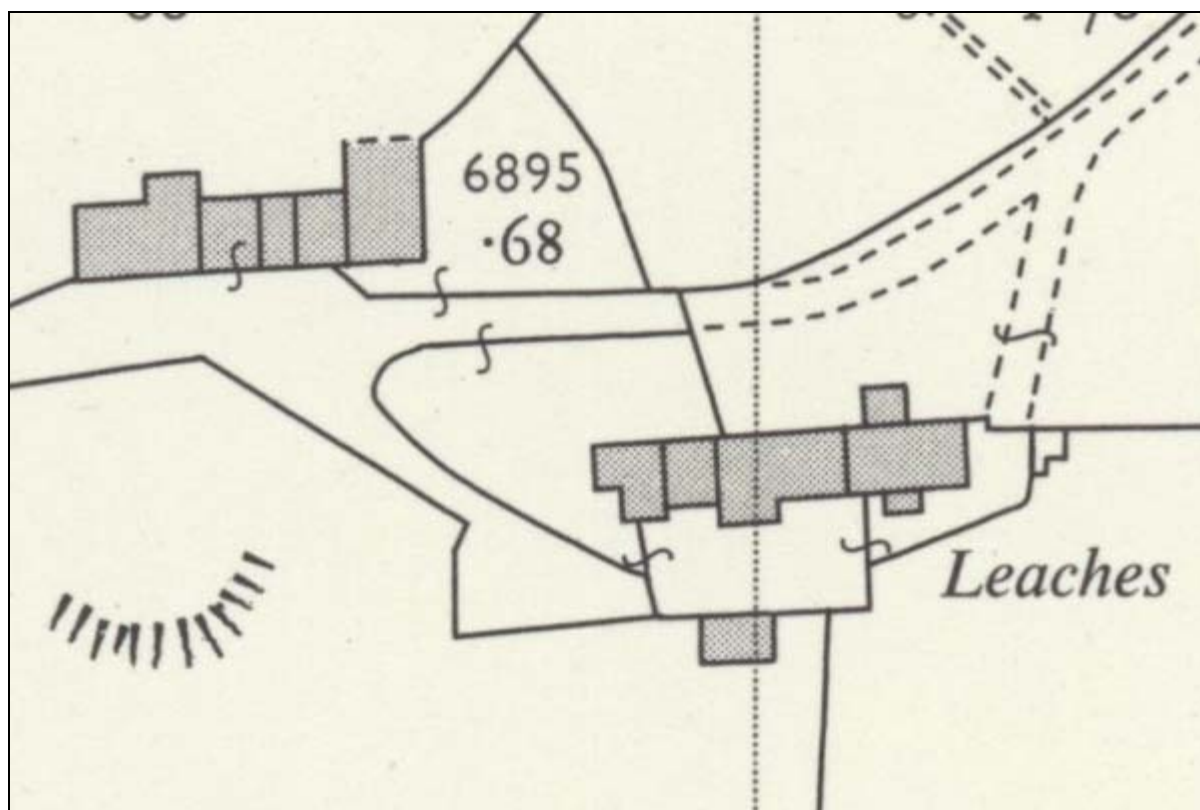
Leaches Farm is a *laithe house*, a long range comprising house and attached barn, a form typical of Pennine farmsteads. Its appearance suggests it is of mid-18th century date and it was probably of lower yeoman (rural middle class) status. Along with a now-disused outbuilding to the northwest, it formed a nucleus termed a *fold*, a collection of farms and outbuildings that is again characteristic of the Pennine uplands. The OS mapping of the mid-1840s (below) shows the building had acquired the majority of its existing footprint by then, while the edition of 1890 shows the barn had been extended to the west and a small freestanding structure on the site of the present outbuilding. The outline of this building is still shown on the map of 1961.



Leaches Farm, as recorded by the six-inch OS map surveyed in 1844-1847



The 1890 25-inch edition shows a small outbuilding to the east of the house



The edition of 1961 shows the outline of the building remaining

5: THE APPLICATION BUILDING AND ITS SETTING

Leaches Farm is a modest moorland farmhouse, altered but of mid-18th century date, of two low storeys with the former barn attached to the west. It has end chimneystacks, a single-storey porch and some square-cut mullioned windows which suggest its date is around 1750.

The farmstead stands off a track leading south from Ashworth Road, overlooking the valley of the Cheesden Brook and with panoramic views across the southeast Lancashire embayment and Pennines beyond. Its moorland surroundings are largely unaltered since the house was first built and therefore define its setting. Its immediate setting has been greatly altered however and is no longer than of a working farmyard but a domestic curtilage in which new buildings are a characteristic. In addition to the existing outbuilding, an agricultural shed has recently been erected northeast of the house and the barn has been extended to the rear. Public views of the buildings from the track are largely limited to the rear only.



The property is a farmhouse and attached barn of around 1750



View of the rear from the track, showing prominent extensions to the barn



The existing outbuilding on the site



The agricultural shed northeast of the house



The wider moorland setting, looking south from the house

6: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE APPLICATION BUILDING

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

The significance of Leaches Farm as a non-designated building derives from its architectural and historic interest – in the local context only – as a rugged Pennine farmhouse and attached barn of mid 18th century date that was the principal building in of an isolated moorland nucleus. Its panoramic upland setting makes an important contribution to its significance as it places the building within its historic, little-altered surroundings. Within this setting, the existing outbuilding, as a modern structure, has no heritage value.

7: PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The relevant government guidance for dealing with heritage-related planning applications is established by Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 210 states that in determining such 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 non-designated heritage assets, paragraph 216 states:

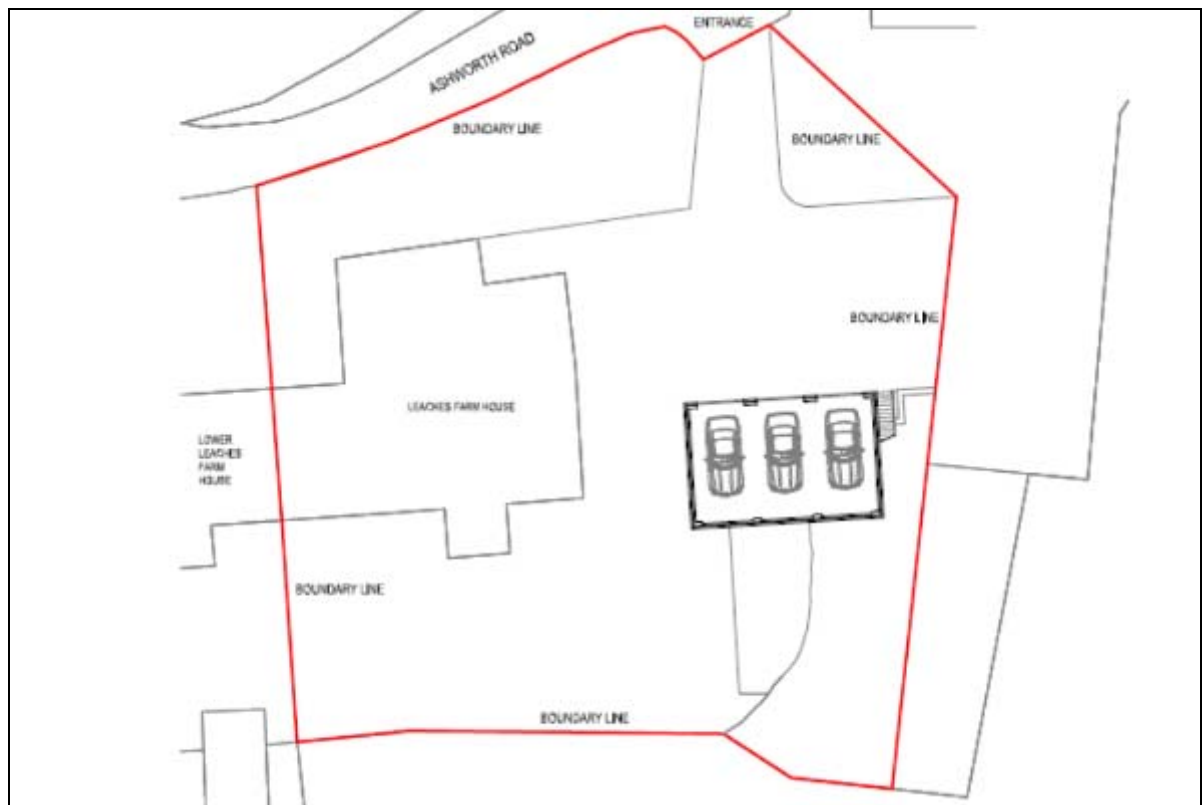
The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

The relevant local planning policy for Rochdale is 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.

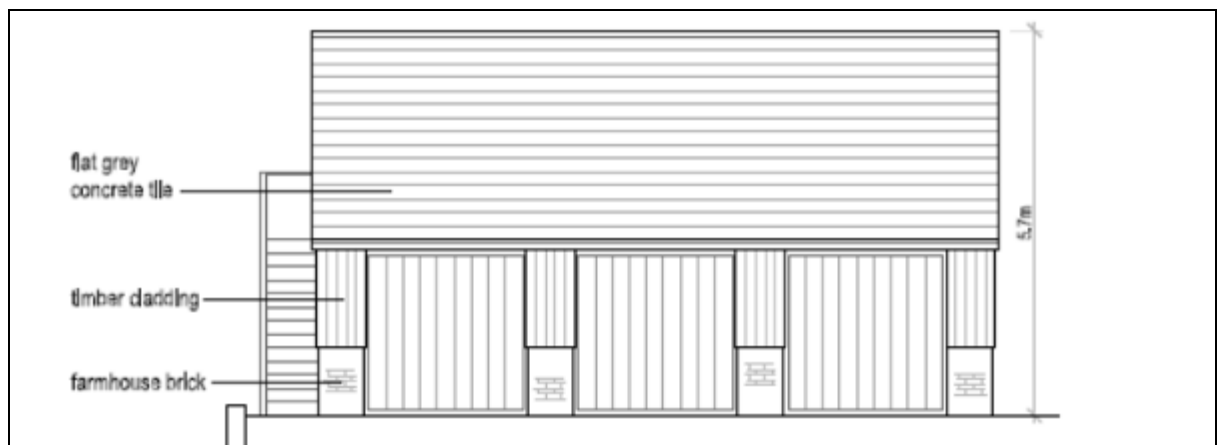
8: IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL

Summary of the works

The proposed structure is designed in a manner of an agricultural outbuilding and contains a garage for three cars on the ground floor with a study in the loft above, as detailed on the submitted drawings.



Site plan (above) and front elevation as proposed



Effect

In terms of its scale and appearance, the proposed outbuilding will be subservient to the house and distinctly separate from it. Materiality is in the main traditional and typical of what could be found in an agricultural building. The outbuilding will therefore not distract or detract from Leaches Farm, which will remain entirely legible as a historic farmstead within the wider moorland surroundings which make the principal contribution to its setting. Its role as the principal building of the site will not be diminished, and its intrinsic interest entirely unaffected. As regards its immediate setting, this has experienced notable change in recent decades with substantial additions and extensions to the built group. The proposed outbuilding will have a considerably lesser presence within the site than these previously-consented developments.

Conclusion

Under national guidance, works to non-designated heritage assets require simply a balanced planning judgment, without the requirement to preserve or enhance that applies to listed buildings. In making this balanced judgment, it should be concluded that the works will have no harmful effect and will preserve the significance and legibility of the application building as the main element of a moorland farming nucleus. There is no heritage reason why it should be refused and therefore the proposal should be determined favourably without delay.