

Proposed Annexe at Higher House, Moor Road, Holcombe Village, Bury. Statement of Significance and Heritage Impact Assessment Statement.

Parts 1 to 5 of this statement are the original version submitted with the pre application enquiry in September 2024. Part 6 onwards is an update following the LPA's comments received in February/March 2025.

1 Background and Introduction

During 2018 and 2019 and in 2021 the present owners repaired and restored the main part of Higher House, a grade II listed building. This followed 2 years of discussion and scheme preparation in conjunction with Bury MBC planning officers. In all 9 applications have been approved for the various elements of the works together with work to a restored vehicle access to the south of the main house. In 2022 proposals were approved for the repair and extension of outbuildings (application 68241) immediately to the north of the main house for use as an annexe to the main residence. Unfortunately, when work was underway to the outbuildings there was a collapse. The local planning authority was not immediately involved in discussions about the site and material was removed from site, and stored, and some retaining wall and foundation work was carried out leaving an unresolved and unattractive area. The current applications for planning permission and listed building consent are aimed at resolving this situation in a manner that preserves and enhances the character of the listed building and that of the Holcombe Conservation Area.



(1) Higher House and the outbuilding site to the right.

The property is a grade II listed building and is a key building that stands at the core of Holcombe Conservation Area. In its immediate vicinity are other listed buildings and non designated heritage assets (NDHA). Proposals for alteration and extension on the site in such circumstances will be of heritage importance as they may affect the listed building itself, and the setting of other listed structures and NDHAs and the character of the conservation area. The first step in assessing how best to proceed is to consider what is significant about the heritage of all these buildings at the centre of the village.

A statement is required in support of the proposals in line with paragraph 200 of the NPPF 2023. Part of the paragraph states that *“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting and the conservation area. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.”*

This statement will first look at significance. It will use the conclusions to advise on the options for the site and these will be discussed in the context of their heritage impact, and tested against the national and local planning policies.

2 Significance

Statements of significance have previously been prepared for the main house and the outbuildings. Both were prepared by Equilibrium Architects, in 2016 (applications 60971 and 60972) and 2021/22 (application 68241). There is also a structural report containing photographs covering the outbuildings prepared by Booth King in 2021. The previous statement covering the outbuildings is included in the current applications. All documents are stand alone and have been used for background and reference. These need to be reviewed and updated.

2.1 History

The name Holcombe is derived from the Saxon ‘Hol’ meaning hollow and the Celtic ‘cwn’ for a circular hollow in a hillside. This describes the main village sitting in a dip on the side of a hill. The earliest written reference is in 1220 when Roger de Montbegon gave ‘my forest called Holcombe’ to the Priory of Monk Bretton. On dissolution the lands past to the manor of Tottington.

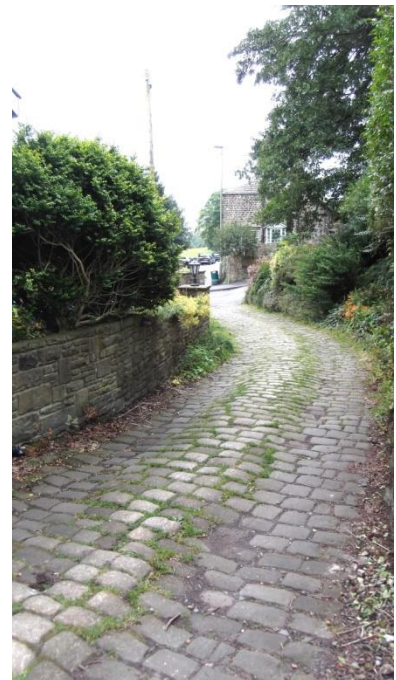
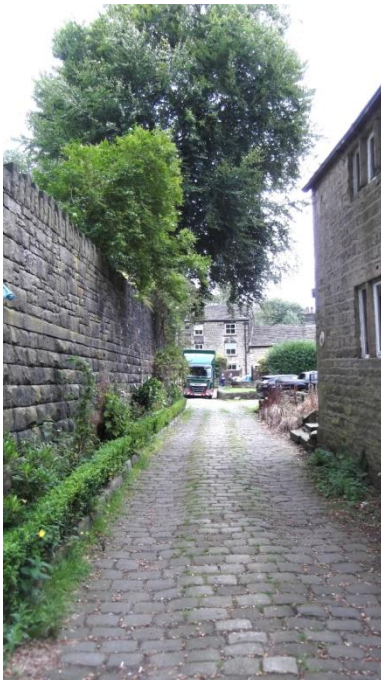
Higher House stands at the core of Holcombe Village at the meeting of pre-turnpike routes, north south and east west. To the south Holcombe Old Road/Cross Lane climbs up from Holcombe Brook and further south from Pot Green and Summerseat and then from Bury and Manchester. This old route remains in the conservation area and at Pot Green and Summerseat where there are also conservation areas. North from Holcombe Village the route climbed up Moor Road to Helmshore and then further north and includes the medieval pilgrims way running north to Whalley Abbey. To the south west a route (Moorbottom Road) branched off Holcombe Old Road and Cross Lane at their junction and runs to the north of Bolton and to Blackburn. To the north east a further route ran down the valley along The Rake towards the fording/bridging point of the River Irwell in Ramsbottom and then on to the east. These pack horse routes or tracks were the main means of transport until the coming of the turnpike trusts at the turn of the 18th/19th centuries. By 1818 Holcombe had been linked more closely into the road network and Holcombe Brook had become a more important junction. In 1792 the Edenfield and Little Bolton Trust (Bolton Road West) had been approved by Act of Parliament and was built by the end of the 18th century, while the Elton and Blackburn Trust’s Turnpike (now Lumb Carr Road) was built in 1812. Most of the old pre-turnpike routes still remain intact within the conservation area.



(2) The core of the village with the early routes running behind the later turnpike roads. To the right (3) is Cross Lane which runs down to Holcombe Old Road and Moorbottom Road.



(4)The village core and Moor Road (5) running up past Higher House and the application site towards Helmshore.



(6,7,8) Stone sett route running between Higher House and the village core and linking Cross Lane with Moor Road.

Higher House was once the White Hart beer house, known as the higher house because it was above the Shoulder of Mutton, set slightly lower at the junction of these early routes. The date of the building of the two hostelries is not recorded but records show that they were the only two licensed premises in Ramsbottom in 1800. In 1884 the White Hart closed and became a residence. It is known to have been occupied by John Rostron a cotton manufacturer and a stone plaque dated 1820 on the gable carries his name and is thought to record the extension of the property to the north. Cockfighting is one of Holcombe's sporting traditions. There was a cockpit at the White Hart Inn and

the local breed of “buffs” were in demand all over the country. Lord Derby who was a major local landowner made it a condition of tenancy that he had first choice of his tenants’ fighting birds. Officially the sport was stopped in 1859 but it is believed that it continued until the 1930s. The Old Holcombe Game Fowl Show, an annual exhibition of game fowl organised by the Holcombe Old English Game Fowl Club, started in 1843. The White Hart was also associated with the Holcombe Harriers (hunt) which was formed at Hey House in the C18.

The earliest recorded building in the village was the Chapel of Ease 1516. The earliest standing buildings are at Hey House to the southwest of the village built as a hunting lodge for Roger Browne in 1616 and possibly 1-3 Alba Street attached to the Shoulder of mutton which may be late C16. Hey House is also said to be linked to the de Trafford family which can trace its family back to the 11th century, prior to the Norman Conquest. The de Trafford family reportedly used Hey House as a hunting lodge and it was the site of the first kennels of the hounds of the Holcombe Harriers. A Courthouse was built in Holcombe in 1664 by the Duke of Albemarle (after whom Alba Street is probably named) who had been given land by Charles II after the Restoration; this was also used as a school. The building was below the church on the site of the “Old Rectory” and was not demolished until 1864 when some of its remains were incorporated into the new schoolhouse, located at Well House, 85 Dundee Lane, and there is a “1664” date carved into the lintel. There must have been a substantial settlement in Holcombe during the C16/C17 to support a chapel, court and school. There appears to have been a prolific building period in Holcombe in the first part of the C18 when the majority of listed buildings in the village were built followed by the building of cottages along the turnpike road in the first part of the C19. Development ceased in the C19 when Ramsbottom began to flourish and little was built in Holcombe during the C20.

It may be that the two inns at the heart of the village were stopping points for travellers. Both had large barns and outbuildings, including stabling at Higher House Cottage and barn that still exists. The barn at the Shoulder of Mutton can be seen on the 1850 and 1893 OS maps and there is a hint of something on the 1930 map. The barn has been demolished and there is no record of its contents. Both building groups appear to be too large with significant upper floor accommodation to be purely beer houses.

Looking at the OS maps, there are outbuildings to the north of Higher House of some form on both the 1893 and 1850 maps, though the latter lacks clarity. The date of the outbuildings is picked up later in part 2.5.

The above details paint a picture of Holcombe as a key location in the areas history between the 16th and early 19th centuries, and with the village core a crucial part of this. Higher House was at the heart of this story from at least the early 18th century.

2.2 Higher House, Architecture and Appearance

The building was listed in 1985 the official list description as follows.

Early C18. Coursed rubble. Flush quoins. Symmetrical. 2½ storeys. Doorway has moulded architrave and pulvinated frieze. Castellated, evidently C19 porch. Each side is a large transom and mullioned window with a total of twelve lights and dripmould (the left-hand one with leading to upper lights). Above each is a 5-light window with dripmould. Above porch is a round-arched window, with keystone, impost mouldings and narrow mullion and transom. Stone eaves gutter. Five casement dormers with hipped roofs set in stone slab roof. Tall gable chimneys. Slightly lower 2-storey extension to right is dated "John and Mary/Roster(on)/1820". Beyond is still lower extension,

probably of similar date. Both are similar in build to earlier house, but have tall square-mullioned windows of two and three lights (later C20 metal casements replacing mullions in hither extension and a metal balcony, also perhaps C20, fronting the upper window). Until 1884 the house was the White Hart Inn. Known as Higher House in distinction to Shoulder of Mutton PH (known as Lower House), with which it shared disorderly reputation c.1800.

In 2016 the Equilibrium statement of significance included the following basic description of Higher House.

'The original Manor House comprises a three storey property with part basement to the rear and is built from traditional load bearing coursed stone construction, with ashlar masonry features including stone quoins, stone cills, head and jambs. The three storey element of the building is covered with a saddleback pitched roof with traditional dormers affording light to the attic rooms. To the east of the Manor House is a single storey open porch with crenellated parapet, which is a C19th Century addition. In 1820 the Manor House (then a Public House) was extended by a two storey extension, the north gable of which holds a plaque and date stone 1820. To the north of the above and attached is a two storey element of the building constructed at a later date but again formed with load bearing stone construction with ashlar masonry features. The two storey element is "L" shaped in plan and covered with individual pitched roofs, with stone slate covering and linked by an interconnecting lead valley gutter. On the north gable within the yard is a single storey porch providing rear access.'

The following observations can be added. These deal largely with the building's relationship with the application site.

The front elevation at its northern end shows no indication of where the initial C19 extension (with the 1820 date stone) was added to the original C18 main building. The whole of the front elevation is in watershot coursed stone and the return at the north end matches that of the south, with similar quoins. The watershot coursed stone returns onto the north gable. Below the central first floor gable window there has been disturbance in the stonework with the courses not running through and below that some rough patching work not coursed. There is a hint in the gable stonework of an external staircase which may have been original to the building. This appears to have led to a taking-in door in the location of what is now the window below the date stone. The window openings on the north of the front elevation and in the gable are probably insertions. There is altered stonework between the window head and sill on the frontage. The date stone probably refers to these alterations together with the extension to the north west which has non-watershot walling in even courses and generally even stone block sizes. The date stone was probably added to the original gable as this would be the most prominent position. A single storey porch at the meeting of the two storey sections appears from the stone coursing to be contemporary with the extension. Tall mullion windows have been added at the north and south ends at some time.

Dealing purely with building's exterior the main elevation is the most important feature with the mullion and transom windows the highlight and with the window above the entrance porch, and its detail, being a key feature. The frontage is imposing and strong and partly symmetrical and is generally pleasing and well balanced. The castellated front porch although a later addition adds drama to the frontage. The roof dormers are very unusual in Holcombe and are probably the only ones in the conservation area. This is an indication of the building's former use. The stonework is generally homogeneous. The south gable and north gable though altered are of merit and these together with the early C19 extension contain unusually tall mullion windows.

In 2008 English heritage advised that one way of assessing significance was to look at the situation under 4 headings: evidential value; historic value; communal value; aesthetic value.

Evidential Value

English Heritage (2008) suggests that evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

The building provides physical evidence of a generally well preserved 18th century public house with the necessary accommodation for servants and possibly travellers. It later became a large private house. The building has been extended and altered. The exact timing of some alterations is unclear. It is clearly a house which indicates an owner of wealth given the ornate timber panelling, staircase, standard of finishes, quality of some fireplaces.

Historic Value

English Heritage (2008) suggests that historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be *illustrative* or *associative*.

This statement paints a picture of Holcombe as a key location in the area's history between the 16th and early 19th centuries, and with the village core a crucial part of this. Higher House was at the heart of this story from at least the early 18th century. It was at the meeting point of numerous pre-turnpike routes and possibly acted as a travellers' stopping point. It had strong links to cockfighting and local hounds hunting. Together with the Shoulder of Mutton it was the only licenced beer house in the C18.

Communal Value

English Heritage (2008) suggests that communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

The 2016 statement of significance by Equilibrium correctly noted –

As with every Conservation Area, the enjoyment of the historic built environment is a shared and collective experience. This relates not only to the visual enjoyment of the buildings within Holcombe Village amidst a rural setting, but also the collective memories of the small community of residents and the much broader community of those who regularly visit and pass through the village. In brief, Higher House contributes to the overall communal value of the place and this value can be readily conserved through maintenance and upkeep of the building and the retention of its historic nature as a former Manor House. Interestingly, in its early life as a Public House through the latter part of the 18th and most of the 19th Century the building would have enjoyed a high communal value being appreciated by locals and visitors alike. Notwithstanding this we understand from discussions with the current owner that Higher House served as a focal point to the village for the village fete and barbeques and also that the gardens were shared by members of the community as an allotment.

Aesthetic Value

English Heritage (2008) suggests that aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

Dealing purely with building's exterior, the main elevation is the most important feature with the mullion and transom windows the highlight and with the window above the entrance porch, and its detail, being a key feature. The frontage is imposing and strong and partly symmetrical and is generally pleasing and well balanced. The castellated front porch although a late addition adds

drama to the frontage. The roof dormers are very unusual in Holcombe and are probably the only ones in the conservation area. This is an indication of the building's former use. The stonework is generally homogeneous. The south gable and north gable though altered are of merit and these together with the early C19 extension contain unusually tall mullion windows.

2.3 Other Listed Buildings and NDHAs within the Village Core

There are a number of significant buildings and building groups close to the application site within the village core. These are either listed grade II or included within the Council's Draft Local List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (and therefore accepted as NDHAs) and their setting may be affected by what happens on the application site. They also, in combination, provide the setting for Higher House and create the character of the village core.

The Shoulder of Mutton's Historic England's list entry (ref 1067276 for 1985) is as follows -

Later C18, probably a rebuilding or remodelling of earlier inn. Symmetrical ashlar front. Three storeys. Three sash windows with glazing bars (casements on top storey probably originally sashes). 4-panel door under masked fanlight; open pediment on pilasters. Quoins. 2-span slate roof with parapet between gable stacks. Nos. 1 and 3 abut to right.

This building is set below Higher House and with visual links up Moor Road to the outbuilding's site (photo 5 above). Between are tall stone retaining walls which were probably built during the early C19 and which re-ordered and re-levelled what was once the open village green (Photos 5, 13 and 14). The walls themselves are of interest. They are constructed in both large and small random blocks and also neatly tooled large blocks, and some in a cyclopean style all set without mortar.



(9) Shoulder of Mutton

1 to 3 Alba Street's entry (ref 1356788 for 1985) is -

C17 or earlier C18. Rubble. Two storeys with three-bay one-storey pentice front. The building slants back from the Shoulder of Mutton PH which abuts on left. Rubble. 3-light upper window with splay mullions in gable end. Stone slab roof. Single-storey rear extension with 2-storey extension beyond, each with 2-light wooden casement window.

These are part of the Shoulder of Mutton group and probably a remainder of a pre C18 beer house or inn set below the road level and adjacent to a rough path that leads to the east down into the Irwell Valley.



(10 and 11) 1 to 3 Alba Street and gable of Shoulder of Mutton

24 and 26 Holcombe Village (list entry 1067277 for 1985). Historic England's description of the group is –

C18. Forming the left-hand end of the range opposite the Shoulder of Mutton PH. Coursed rubble. Three storeys. Stone splay-mullioned windows. No. 26 (on left) has two 3-light windows, except on ground floor, which has windows with altered glazing. No. 24 has one 3-light window, except on top floor, which has one 3-light plus one 2-light window. Doors in flush surrounds, central to no. 26 and to right of no. 24.

This group fronts both the Shoulder of Mutton on the east and the old north/south route on the west. The rear is partly shown on photos 6 and 7.



(12) 24 and 26 Holcombe Village

The local list includes 18 to 20, 28 and 30 to 34 Holcombe Village (Photo 13 and part 12), with ashlar main elevations and rubble or rough coursed work at the gables and rear, late C18 or early C19; 1 Cross Lane and 2 to 4 Lumb Carr Road (Photo 3, late C18 in watershot coursed stone); Heather Cottage 22 to 24 Cross Lane and an early former farmhouse possibly late C17 or early C18. The list does not include Higher House Cottage and Barn and 3 Helmshore Road (Photo 14) which are also considered to be of architectural and historic significance. The barn and cottage were part of the Higher House group owned by the owner of Higher House. They were built or altered in 1751 which is shown on the lintel over the stables entrance. They are in plain squared and watershot coursing with a flag roof and the cottage being 3 storeys, and all supporting the operation of the White Hart/Higher House during the C18/C19. There has been a tall C21 extension at the rear/north with a recent random stone wall infill.



(13) 18 to 34 Holcombe Village



(14) Higher House Cottage/barn and 3 Helmsore Road

These buildings illustrate the use of stone over three centuries and the changing methods of construction and detail over that period. They range from rubble walling and cyclopean style masonry to watershot coursing and fine ashlar; and from small splayed mullion windows to large Georgian sashes. Throughout the material is stone and the treatment is in line with the local vernacular. There are no buildings in the core with a different mix of materials and details (but for 4 brick chimney stacks). There are no modern buildings or extensions illustrating the fashions and materials of the late C19 or the C20. Although some of the above buildings are not immediately adjacent to the application site they are part of the whole picture within the village core where small changes in one place may affect the overall area character. Within this setting very careful consideration needs to be given to what happens on the application site and to ensure that this consistent character is maintained.

2.4 The Conservation Area

The conservation area is a very large area of farmland and moorland containing individual buildings and groups of buildings and settlements. In 2010 Kathryn Sather and Associates produced an appraisal of the conservation area. The report outlined in summary the special character of the Conservation Area. It stated that it derives from the following elements, all of which remain the same today. Those in bold/italics relate particularly to the village core and the application site.

1. The unspoilt scattered rural village on the shoulder of a hill, built in ***tightly knit small hamlets*** amidst fields of pasture and small woodlands, ***along old packhorse and turnpike routes***, dating from the 17th century and earlier.

2. ***The dominance of 18th and early 19th century residential and agricultural buildings, with very little modern infill***, set in gardens in scale with the size of the building.

3. The adaptation of an early pre-industrial community with textile home-working to outworking, as demonstrated by the buildings, pathways and handrails which testify to the interconnection between Holcombe and Ramsbottom.

4. The high quality of the natural landscape of the Conservation Area and its setting, combining steeply sloping moorland, pasture and woodland, typical of Pennine valleys.

5. ***Views out of and into the Conservation Area***. The Peel Monument and the church steeple are important landmarks viewed from inside and outside the area while from within the area there are panoramic views to the north, east and south.

6.The comprehensive range of dwelling types from a similar period, ranging from houses of the landed gentry, farmhouses and workers' cottages, often in rows, with appropriate ancillary buildings.

7.The large number of buildings of architectural and historical interest, including a large number of statutorily listed buildings as well as many others on the Draft Local List and of similar quality.

8.The homogeneity and visual harmony of the buildings resulting from the use of local materials (millstone grit, stone tiles), traditional building techniques (weather struck masonry, stone corbels supporting rainwater goods, coal holes in the walls) and the unity of height and scale.

9.Traditional stone walls along the roads with upstanding stones, several stone troughs, the large number of traditional stone gateposts and use of widespread use of stone sets, utilising local materials.

10.The long historical association with hunting and hunting dogs, attracting the interest of royalty, as well as other sporting traditions including cockfighting and the Holcombe Wakes.

This independent view confirms the values and character outlined under 2.3 and the importance of traditional materials and the homogeneity of the area's buildings and details. At a time when such national government titles existed (c1980/90s) the conservation area of Holcombe was referred to as 'outstanding' to raise it above the many conservation areas of mixed qualities. It is of such importance as an undamaged example of local C17 to C19 hillside vernacular, still within its early setting undisturbed by later development, and with a long, clear and strong history, it deserves the highest level of protection.

The conservation area is a visitor attraction for walkers of all kinds as well as a resource for those in the village. People follow these old routes and footpaths far and wide and many visit Peel Tower and the pilgrims cross. They come to Holcombe because of its qualities. They may not understand its history or judge its architecture but they know that it is special. Changes that may threaten its special qualities are noted by those who live and visit.

It would score strongly on the evidential, historical, communal and aesthetic values assessment.

2.5 The Original Outbuildings

The majority of the original outbuildings have been removed. Some boundary and retaining walls remain. All the materials removed have been retained elsewhere on site with the stone from the front elevation stored on pallets and marked up in relation to its original location within the elevation. However, individual stones are not marked. Foundations/footings have been installed in line with the walls shown on approved application 68241 and the embankment to the west has been retained with a new block work wall. This extends further north than the original embankment and has involved the removal of a small part of that embankment. See photos 15 to 17.



(15) Looking south from Moor Road



(16) Original stone retaining wall



(17) New retaining and flanking wall



Stone stored in the garden

It could be argued that the significance of the outbuildings has gone and cannot be replaced. However, it is useful to look at what existed up until 2022 and consider its architectural and historical value.

The outbuildings were a concentrated and complex group of cell like enclosed spaces, yards, and boundary walls. Enclosed spaces had mono pitch slate covered roofs. The stone walling ranged from squared regular courses to extremely rough random rubble work, and all qualities in between. Some poor walling contained well tooled cornerstones, lintels, and stone door and window jambs and rubble panels ran in line but not bonded with good coursed work. Rough walling appears in places where good work might be expected and vice versa. Some doorways have low lintel levels. Examples of these points are shown randomly in a few photographs below. Some of this indicates that some/parts of these outbuildings and boundary walls might have been contemporary with the early main house. Some of the coursed work is similar to the walling on the 2 storey north west extension. There is a strong indication that there had been a great deal of alteration and addition over a period and some of that work was of mixed quality. The photographs of the building may support the comment above in part 2.1 that the outbuildings were, in part, from a period prior to 1850 and so they would represent a small but incomplete understanding of the story of the development of the White Hart/Higher House.



(18) Moor Road



(19) 18 from above



(20) 18 from the courtyard



(21) Boundary wall in north



(22) Moor Road, watershot wall and gate



(23) Good quality int. Walling



(24) Good quality tooled stone framing



(25) Poor quality rubble walling



(26) Re-worked elevation

24 and 26 also illustrate the lack of bonding between inserted and altered panels.

Assessing significance we look again at 4 headings: evidential value; historic value; communal value; aesthetic value.

Evidential Value

The outbuildings provided physical evidence of some ancillary rooms that would be required to support an 18/19th century public house which subsequently became a manor house. The natural coursed stone, random work and construction is evidence of the use of locally sourced quarried materials and craftsmanship. The lean-to roofs using a combination of stone and natural slate, and

the construction referred to above are evidence of the local vernacular. However, the sequence of works is unclear.

Historical Value

The buildings contribute to the sense of history in the place and helps us develop a better understanding and appreciation of the past societies who occupied the village. These would be local tradesmen and servants to help service the manor house/public house.

Communal Value

The loss of the buildings is of local concern even though they were probably never regarded as an important group of buildings. Possibly of value only when lost. The loss and appearance of the site will have been noted by the many walkers and visitors who would normally pass by along the old road on route Peel Tower and further afield.

Aesthetic Value

It has to be appreciated that the outbuildings are subservient to the main building and would not be expected to be of great merit. They were a jumble of building forms and elevations of very mixed qualities where aesthetic merit can only be considered as very low. That said, the boundary walls and elevations which fronted on to Moor Road oddly demonstrate a simple and quirky appeal.

Turning to what now remains of the site it is clearly an eyesore, a hole in the character of the area and a negative influence on Higher House, and on the other listed buildings and NDHAs in the vicinity. It affects views within the immediate core of the village and the character of the conservation area. If judged against the 4 values it would score minus on all tests.

2.6 Summary of Significance

The main points from the above paragraphs are as follows-

History

The above details paint a picture of Holcombe as a key location in the area's history and recorded between the 16th and early 19th centuries, and with the village core a crucial part of this. Higher House was at the heart of this story from at least the early 18th century.

Higher House

A particularly important building amongst many high quality well preserved buildings forming an unspoilt village core. It has a documented and special history. Its main elevation is its strongest feature and any proposals for the site of the outbuildings should be assessed against this.

The Setting of Listed Buildings and NDHAs

These buildings illustrate the use of stone over three centuries and the changing methods of construction and detail over that period. They range from rubble walling and cyclopean style masonry to watershot coursing and fine ashlar; and from small splayed mullion windows to large Georgian sashes. Throughout the material is stone and the treatment is in line with the local vernacular. There are no buildings in the core with a different mix of materials and details (but for 4 brick chimney stacks). There are no modern buildings or extensions illustrating the fashions and materials of the late C19 or C20. Although some of the above buildings are not immediately adjacent to the application site they are part of the whole picture within the village core where small changes in one place may affect the overall area character. Within this setting very careful consideration

needs to be given to what happens on the application site and to ensure that this consistent character is maintained.

Conservation Area

This independent view confirms the values and character outlined under 2.3 and the importance of traditional materials and the homogeneity of the area's buildings and details. At a time when such national government titles existed (c1980/90s) the conservation area of Holcombe was referred to as 'outstanding' to raise it above the many conservation areas of mixed qualities. It is of such importance as an undamaged example of local C17 to C19 hillside vernacular, still within its early setting undisturbed by later development, and with a long, clear and strong history, it deserves the highest level of protection.

The conservation area is a visitor attraction for walkers of all kinds as well as a resource for those in the village. They follow these old routes and footpaths far and wide and many visit Peel Tower and the pilgrims cross set above the village. They come to Holcombe because of its qualities. They may not understand its history or judge its architecture but they know that it is special. Changes that may threaten its special qualities are noted by those who live and visit.

Higher House Outbuildings

The outbuildings were a concentrated and complex group of cell like enclosed spaces, yards, and boundary walls of mixed condition, walling types and periods some possibly contemporary with the main buildings. The Moor Road elevation demonstrates a simple and quirky appeal. These buildings had a function in support of the PH or house and added to the understanding of life in the village. Their loss leaves a hole in a prominent position in the village which is harmful to the significance of the listed building, and to the setting of the village core and the character of the conservation area. Their location along one of many early roads and tracks bring that loss to the attention of the many walkers who visit Holcombe.

3.0 Options

The following appear to be the options available -

1. No action and the site continues to appear as at present.
2. A basic improvement of the block work retaining walls and site to improve their appearance.
3. The rebuilding of the outbuildings to follow exactly the scheme that was approved, application 69041.
4. Building a scheme which appears externally in line with the original permission but which is constructed to a slightly different construction design and reflects the current position on site.
5. A totally new and more modern building that is in sympathy with the character of the area and Higher House.
6. No work on the site is deemed acceptable by the LPA.

Unfortunately, no scheme will undo what has happened but options 1 and 6 would not be in the interest of preserving or enhancing the character or what is special about the buildings and the area, and would be highly damaging to the significance of the listed building, the setting of other listed buildings and NHDAs and the conservation area. Option 2 may produce some very modest improvement in the site's appearance but would be a lost opportunity in terms of enhancement and restoration of this important location and setting. Option 5 would be a big design challenge where there is a risk that a new design might intrude visually and not be understood by the local

community and visitors. It would not be a simple matter to agree a scheme with the LPA and this may take considerable time to resolve. It does probably provide potentially the lowest cost option to achieve a proposed development. A successful modern scheme is not impossible but in such sensitive circumstances, and in a prominent and visible location, a more traditional design and one based upon known and recorded information can be justified. Options 1, 2 and 5 and 6 are rejected. Options 3 and 4 are discussed further.

Options 3 and 4

All the stone and slate from the demolition is on the Higher House site. The former front elevation stone is stored on pallets and each pallet is linked to areas within that elevation. There are many photographs of the outbuildings that could provide an architect with a sound basis to prepare a detailed scheme for rebuilding. In theory the outbuildings could be rebuilt as faithfully as possible, not as they were but broadly in line with the approved scheme for the annexe. This scheme would have to be adjusted as the retaining structures are now different from those shown on the approved drawings. New permissions are required as this would now be a rebuilding and not a conversion. There are many examples nationally where this approach is acceptable for the restoration of historic buildings as the schemes are based on accurate information not on speculation, imagination or guesswork. But the rebuilding would not be the C18/C19 building, it would be a broad copy. Within the approved listed building consent and planning approvals there was some flexibility in the design approach in the form of significant alteration to walls, the prospect of additional wall rebuilding due to the known and unknown condition indicated by the structural report, and more modern roofing details. The new roof additions would be a clear external indication that the rebuilt outbuildings were part of the C21 history of the building's story. The LPA had accepted that the building had to be altered to make it useable and that there would be some loss of significance that would be balanced out by the future use and sound repair of the outbuildings. Option 3 is workable but its complexity is unnecessary and the restoration of all the approved stone walls is meaningless in the context of heritage issues.

The approved scheme retained the main Moor Road elevation but altered some of the elevations to the south and north. Internally there would be no features visible from the earlier structures. Now that the original building has gone in totality the rebuilding of the interior walls and the interior of the external walls are of little or no heritage importance. What has been shown by this statement is that what is important is its external appearance and visual relationship with the main house and the village core. An option that rebuilds the outbuildings to modern standards is entirely credible and pragmatic. Internal walls can be in block work and external walls can be of cavity construction with a stone outer skin, so long as they are stable and in line with the original Moor Road and other exteriors and such details as large cornerstones can be successfully accommodated. Obviously the stone on the exterior would have to be cut to achieve a cavity and the standard of stone working overall would need to be high to achieve convincing traditional external walling. The stone should be laid with the original face towards Moor Road etc and modern 'crazy paving' walling on any elevation must be avoided. The bonding may need to be strengthened with ties where the coursing does not run through avoiding potential weak points. The external appearance can be broadly as in the approved schemes. In order to continue with traditional details and materials it is now proposed to use reclaimed slates on all roofs rather than zinc. This will reinforce the traditional approach that has been taken. It is also proposed to raise the door lintel on the Moor Road elevation to make that door useable. Both adjustments will not harm the character of the outbuildings. Even with this careful approach, weathering and the visual settling-in of the external walls will take some time. Each external elevation would have to be carefully drawn by the architect. CAD drawings are not particularly appropriate for this kind of work, hand drafted scaled drawings based on the

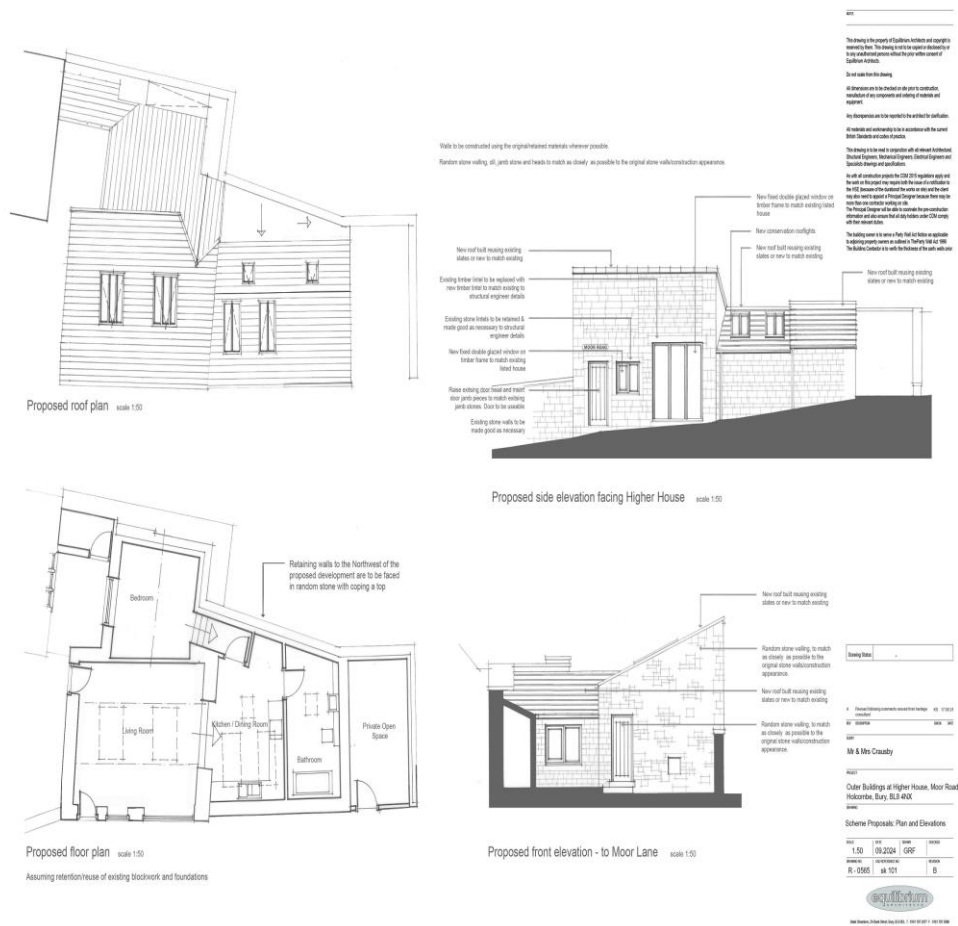
photographs will provide a clearer and more useable tool. Option 4 is considered to be in line with good conservation and heritage principles.

Both options 3 and 4 can be made to work. Option 4 is preferred and this option is the submitted scheme.

4.0 Proposals

The proposal is to rebuild the proposed annexe with broadly the same external appearance as the permission 69041 including the following details and illustrated by the accompanying drawings and documents.

- Previous Heritage Statements
- Drawing R-0565 SLP Site Location Plan
- Drawing R0565 Rev B sk 101 Proposed Plans and Elevations
- 2024 Heritage Statement (this document)



Drawing for illustration and not to scale or in proportion

1. Creating a living room, bedroom, dining kitchen and bathroom within a retained courtyard and with an additional small area of open space to the north.

2. Rebuilding the Moor Road and north and south elevations of the outbuildings in traditional coursed and random work in line with the original walling and as described in 3.0 above. Details such as quoins, heads, sills and jambs will be faithfully and carefully restored.
3. Facing the block work retaining walls where they are exposed in random stone work with a stone coping.
4. Restoring the two mono pitch slate covered roofs sloping east/west and inserting conservation roof lights. Adding slate covered roofs between the mono pitch roofs, also containing roof lights.
5. Providing a new boundary wall and gate north of the new buildings and making good the boundary wall linking the outbuildings with the main house. Repairing and making good to the store to the south west of the new buildings.
6. Installing a three light timber double glazed window to the living room and small windows in the Moor Road and south elevations. Providing timber boarded doors to both elevations.
7. Re-fixing the cast iron Moor Road street sign.

5.0 Complying with National and Local Policies

Section 16 (2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that: 'In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.' The 2023 National Planning policy Framework (NPPF) and local planning policies in the Bury Unitary Development Plan 1997 implement this requirement.

The NPPF includes the following heritage policies relevant to the proposed development affecting a designated heritage asset (listed building or conservation area).

203. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*

205. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

The Council's relevant policy for listed buildings is:

In considering applications for Listed Building Consent, the Council will have regard to the following criteria:

- a) the impact of the proposal on the historic fabric of the building;*
- b) the relationship of any extension to the Listed Building in terms of its height, size, design, and roofscape;*
- c) the need to protect the setting of the Listed Building;*
- d) the impact of associated ancillary facilities and infrastructure works.*

The Council's relevant policy for conservation areas is:

'EN2/2 - Conservation Area Control. Development within a Conservation Area will only be acceptable if it preserves or enhances the special character or appearance of the area. In considering proposals for development in Conservation Areas, regard will be had to the following criteria:

*1 the nature of the development in terms of its bulk, height, materials, colour, design and detailing;
2 the relationship between the proposed development and the architectural and visual qualities of the surrounding area.*

The Council has no specific policy for locally listed buildings or NDHAs but the government's policy states:

209. 'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application 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.'

It is submitted that the significance of the building and village core has been fully assessed and understood and a balanced case has been made in this statement that the current proposals (option 4) do not harm what is special about Higher House, the setting of other listed buildings and NDHAs, and the character of the Holcombe Conservation Area. The applications are broadly in line with applications recently approved by the LPA. Where they differ relates largely to the interior of the new building which will be separate from the main house. The proposals will quickly remove the eyesore that is currently on site and that is harmful to the heritage of the village core. It will largely restore the site to its appearance prior to the loss of the outbuildings and will provide a long term pragmatic solution to the site.

M Nightingale Dip TP, Dip Arch Cons
September 2024

6.0 Pre Application Submission.

The Conservation Officer was previously contacted in August 2024 for his thoughts on the 6 options outlined in 3.0 above. His response was to say that a heritage statement was required and he referred to the relevant NPPF policies. Consequently, a pre application submission was made on the 25 September 2024 (ref 03020/E). An initial verbal and written response and discussion with the Conservation Officer took place between the 11 and 25 November 2024. The main thread of the LPA's response was that the chosen option was not acceptable as it was a pastiche of a previous architectural period. The LPA put forward revisions to the submitted scheme and these were incorporated into a revised submission made on the 6 January 2025. A final formal written response from the LPA was then received on the 14 February 2025. Following further communication the pre-application enquiry was completed on the 4 March 2025. Some elements of the guidance received from the LPA are included within the Planning Statement.

7.0 LPA's Pre-application Response

The LPA's response was in the form of telephone calls and e-mails. The LPA's formal response was as follows:

'Heritage

The Conservation Officer's comments have been sent separately by Dean Clapworthy. Please note that PFE Policy JP-P2 - Heritage will now be applicable in addition to NPPF paragraphs and UDP Policies previously considered. This policy seeks to positively conserve, sustain and enhance our historic environment and heritage assets and their settings.'

There has been no detailed written response on heritage issues in connection with the original pre-application submission. This is contrary to the LPA's website which states that the Council will provide a detailed written response to pre-application submissions. The original proposal has been described as a pastiche by the Conservation Officer and in his view is inappropriate. There was some e-mail exchange which covered the Conservation Officer's preferred solution, but no written justification of his judgement. A request for further written explanation has not been met.

A pastiche is generally regarded as unacceptable in heritage terms when a proposal is invented based on a single or number of architectural styles but without sound evidence of the nature and detail of any previous structures. This is not the case with the original proposal. It is a combination of rebuilding of the old carriage shed based on a large number of detailed photographs (and using the original materials) and extension based on the simple character of the local architecture. It would be no different from the proposal approved as a conversion and extension under application 68241 which was considered to be acceptable in heritage terms. Any confusion over the origins of the building could be dealt with in the traditional manner – a date stone. The heritage statement looked thoroughly at the options and this appears to have been disregarded without explanation by the LPA. Sadly, although acceptable to the Conservation Officer his preferred scheme removes elements of historic interest linked to the story of the main house and its history. Compared to the original proposal the revised scheme would involve a loss of significance and character. It is considered that the original proposal met the tests within the advice from Historic England (Historic England's Approach to the Reconstruction of Heritage Assets).

However, in order to make progress the applicant has reluctantly accepted the approach taken by the LPA.

8.0 Proposals

The current proposed development is a single storey annexe constructed in natural random coursed stone with stone slab and slate double pitched roof. The roof pitch facing away from Moor Road will contain roof lights. The accommodation covers kitchen, living room, single bedroom and a bathroom, with small courtyard areas in natural stone to the east and west. There will be random stone boundary walls and retaining walls. The materials will be reclaimed from the stone and slate currently on site saved from the original outbuildings. Any additional materials required will be natural local materials with details/samples submitted for approval by the LPA. The building's footprint will be the same as that approved under application 68241. There will be no planting on site and no work required to existing trees. The proposals have been amended in line with the LPA's comments. There will be no alteration to Moor Road. The drawings refer to the materials proposed for windows and doors. See plans and elevations below.

any potential confusion about date can be resolved with a date stone referring to the year of completion. It will fill a damaging visual hole in this part of the area with a building of similar scale and in the same materials as the original outbuildings.

On the 23 January 2025 the Conservation Officer wrote the following in connection with the amended proposals –

'I am now satisfied the attached revised scheme would now at least preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and preserve the setting of the Grade II listed Higher house.'

10.0 Complying with National and Local Policies/Guidance

The relevant policies are paragraphs 202 to 221 of the NPPF, and EN1/2, EN2/1, EN2/2, and JP-P2 of the local plans. Most of these are covered in part 5 above. However, The NPPF was updated in December 2024. The paragraphs have changed in number only. The most relevant being :

210. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*

212. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

The LPA's policies are still as listed in 5, and JP-P2 was adopted as part of the Places for Everyone Plan in March 2024 and this contains more general policies as follows :

Particular consideration will be given to ensure that the significance of key elements of the historic environment which contribute to Greater Manchester's distinctive identity and sense of place are protected from harm. These include historic town centres, places of worship, historic transport routes including the canal network, industrial buildings and structures including textile mills, farmsteads and other sites, buildings, and areas of identified archaeological, architectural, artistic and/or historic value. Development proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets and/or their settings will be considered having regard to national planning policy.

The NPPF and JP-P2 are fairly general dealing with the principle of damage to significance. The LPA's policies are more specific with regard to listed buildings and include -

- a) the impact of the proposal on the historic fabric of the building;*
- b) the relationship of any extension to the Listed Building in terms of its height, size, design, and roofscape;*
- c) the need to protect the setting of the Listed Building;*

and for conservation areas -

- 1 the nature of the development in terms of its bulk, height, materials, colour, design and detailing;*
- 2 the relationship between the proposed development and the architectural and visual qualities of the surrounding area.*

Part 9 above details the impact of the proposal. It meets the objectives a to c on listed buildings above and 1 and 2 for conservation areas. It should therefore meet any tests for impact on local NDHAs and the more general requirements of the NPPF and JP-P2 for protection of significance. The implementation of the proposal will remove an eyesore in the village that currently harms area and site character and significance and replace it with a building that enhances the site, the setting of Higher House and the core of the conservation area.

M Nightingale Dip TP, Dip Arch Con.
March 2025