

Barrack Fold Farm, Ainsworth, Bolton

Heritage Impact Assessment

November 2022





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1. Introduction

Townscape have been commissioned by the owners of Barrack Fold Farm to produce this Heritage Statement of significance and Heritage Impact Assessment to support a listed building planning application for change of use, conversion and alterations to outbuildings at Barrack Fold Farm. Townscape are Chartered Town Planning and Heritage Consultants who serve public, private and community sector clients. We specialise in all aspects of our historic environment, heritage, planning and wider urban design.



Fig. 1, Former farmyard with outbuildings

2. Historic Description and Context

- 2.1 Ainsworth is located about three miles west of Bury town centre in Greater Manchester, on undulating ground to the south of the West Pennine Moors. The topography of the village, on a slightly elevated site, gives Ainsworth an attractive setting, with fields on all sides. The land lies between 140 and 240 metres above sea level, and the underlying geology is carboniferous sandstone, a reliable building stone. It is within the Radcliffe North Ward and is close to the boundary with Bolton MBC.
- 2.2 Ainsworth is a good example of a village which developed initially as a farming community, but expanded during the industrial period. The village grew during the 19th century as a result of the development of local stone quarrying and the spinning, weaving and bleaching of cotton. The village has a linear form, spread along the main east-west road (the B6196) between Bolton and Bury, a road that pre-dates the early 19th century turnpike, built to the south. Subsidiary streets and lanes lead into the fields to the south and north; many of these lanes are un-metalled which contributes to the rural character of the village.

- 2.2 Barrack Fold Farm itself has its origins in the early to mid 17th century. The farmhouse itself was considerably upgraded and improved following a devastating fire in the early 21st Century.
- 2.3 The farmstead itself is made up of a collection of buildings including farmhouse, stable block, barn and brick shuppen. In addition, a number of other later 20th and 21st structures exist to include, open sided dutch barn, timber animal house and block built animal structure. These later buildings are of little interest.
- 2.4 Although the buildings are listed at grade II the actual proposals are for works to the outbuildings and not the farmhouse. Although an assessment of the setting of the farmhouse and impact upon the evolved farmstead will be made.
- 2.5 As previously noted Barrack Fold Farm dates from the early to mid 17th century with a clear development phases of the buildings over time. For the purposes of context, the listing description for the farmhouse is as follows: ***Farmhouse, C17, with alterations and additions. Stone. 2 storeys. Main section has very narrow courses with dressed angles and massive stones to upper windows, but part of upper storey has wider courses and was probably rebuilt. This section has one 3-light splay-mullion window on ground floor and 2 windows above.***

Heavy flush entrance lintel has curved soffit and is inscribed '1631 RHE'. Interior has massive beams and wide boarded doors with strap hinges. Formerly also with inscriptions 'RTH 1601' and '- 1622'. To left is one-window section which has brick pantile projection. To right is cross-wing with gable projection and stone slab roof which to the front forms an outbuilding with weatherboarded upper parts and brick below. To the rear it has a multi-light window on ground floor, with continuous moulding above, and 2 windows on upper floor, enlarged, perhaps in C18. The farmhouse listing has not been updated to reflect the changes.

- 2.6 **The Stable Block** runs north/south and is of stone and at two storeys with stone flag roof. The structure is split for loose boxes for horses with hayloft above. Staircase and floor to loft above is modern. Doors and windows to the stable are replacement. To the roof is a single timber truss with queen struts appears to be non-load bearing with modern trusses elsewhere in the roof space. Purlins are modern.
- 2.7 **Barn.** For the most part the barn has been severely altered with replacement internal floor, all timbers to floors, stairs, and roof timbers. The barn is constructed in a mixture of coursed stone and brick where extended. Remnants of original fabric exist but is much altered.

- 2.8 **A Brick Shippen** is attached to the west side of the barn forming an early 20th century extension and formed as a cow house. The shippen is brick built under a slate roof and brick bond in common bond. South elevation has three entrance doors to its gable with stone lintels above, other elevations are single storey with windows. Internally, the shippen has cow boskins in stone with concrete manure passage. Machine cut king post trusses are evident in the roof.
- 2.9 **Dutch Barn.** Open sided modern structure of cement and aluminium panels over a steel structure with block walls – No interest.
- 2.10 **Existing Garage** east of the stables. Garage is single storey of block and stone outer face construction under a slate roof. The garage is late/early 21st century in age and has limited interest.
- 2.11 Existing timber agricultural structure referred to as unit G on site plan. Single storey and of no interest.
- 2.12 Existing agricultural building of block construction with shallow aluminium roof referred to as unit H on site plan. The structure is of no interest.

- 2.13 **Setting of Barrack Fold Farm** – The farm is set on an open aspect within a pastoral landscape with open views at all points. The farmstead is formed with a central courtyard with farmhouse and principal barn and stables looking onto the courtyard. The spatial plan form of the farm is of interest and is its setting. The buildings look towards one another forming an interesting farmstead.

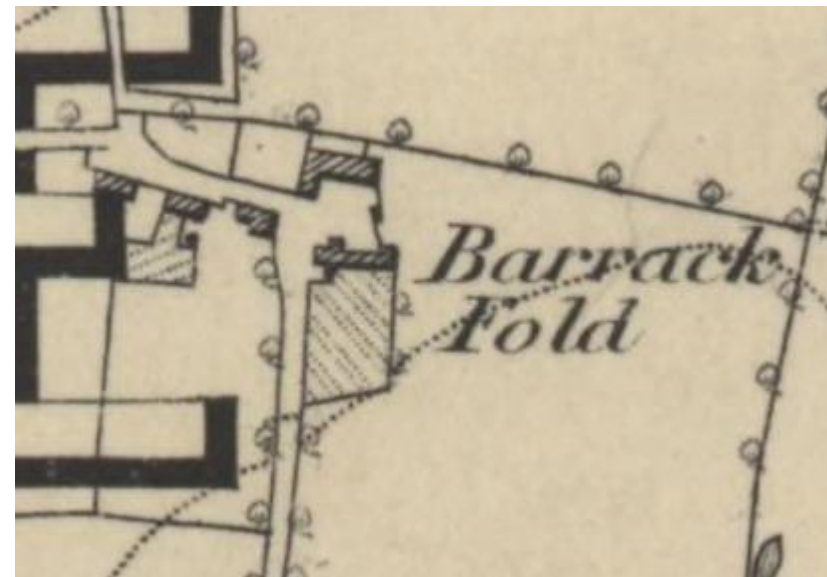


Fig. 2, OS Map extract 6in 1847



Fig. 3, OS Map extract 6in 1890

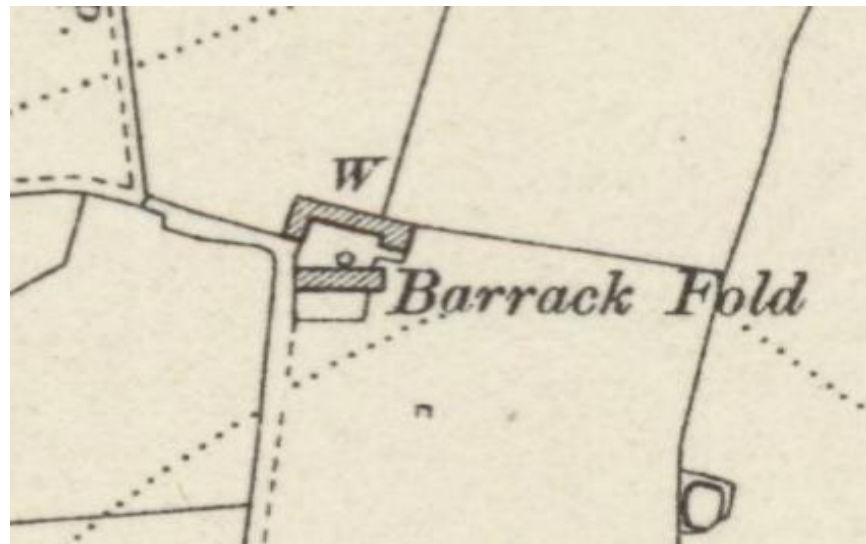


Fig. 4, OS Map extract 6in 1911

3. Statement of Significance and Heritage Planning Policy Context

- 3.1 Understanding significance is a key principle for managing change to heritage assets, and is embedded within current government policy in the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework). A key objective in the NPPF is 'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets.' The NPPF advises that the more significant the heritage asset the greater weight should be given its conservation. English Heritage issued Conservation Principles in 2008 to explain the importance of understanding what is significant before making changes to a historic building. English Heritage set out four main aspects of significance: evidential (or archaeological), historical, aesthetic and communal. Measuring significance is not an exact science; it relies on a combination of comparative analysis, an understanding of the building's development and architectural history and the setting. Assessments depend on using judgment in relation to the quality of the original design and fabric and the level of alteration. There are four main categories of significance that can be measured:

Exceptional – an asset important at the highest national or international levels, including scheduled ancient monuments, Grade I and II* Listed buildings and World Heritage Sites. The

NPPF advises that substantial harm should be wholly exceptional.

High – a designated asset important at a national level, including Grade II listed buildings and locally designated conservation areas. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be exceptional.

Medium – an undesignated asset important at local to regional level, including buildings on a Local List (non-statutory) or those that make a positive contribution to a conservation area. May also include less significant parts of listed buildings. Buildings and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is usually scope for adaptation.

Low – structure or feature of very limited heritage value and not defined as a heritage asset. Includes buildings that do not contribute positively to a conservation area and also later additions to listed buildings of much less value.

Negative – structure or feature that harms the value of heritage asset. Wherever practicable, removal of negative features should be considered, taking account of setting and opportunities for enhancement.

3.2 **The Stables** although altered holds a degree of interest due to its age, construction and it forms an edge to the farmyard. The building would be considered Curtlidge to the listed farmhouse and appears on 1st edition maps. All elevations and openings are of interest. Single timber truss to hayloft has significance although the truss appears to be non-structural and decorative only.

The Barn although much altered holds a degree of interest due to its age, construction and it forms an edge to the farmyard. The building would be considered Curtlidge to the listed farmhouse and appears on 1st edition maps.

The Shippen, map regression clearly shows the shippen as a later addition early 20th century and attached off the gable of the long barn. The shippen has limited interest and whilst still considered to be a Curtlidge building its significance is less than the principal original farmstead buildings. The stone animal boskins are of interest and should be reused where possible.

Dutch Barn, garage and agricultural buildings are of no interest.

3.4 External areas:

The structures that face the courtyard are bounded by gravel driveway and grass areas beyond. Others areas to the farmstead are a mixture of tarmac, gravel and access track

and grassland. Small stone dwarf walls exist but form planting areas and soft landscaping.

4. Overall significance of outbuildings to Barrack Fold Farm.

The farmhouse forms the principal listed structure within the farmstead to which no works are proposed. Other structures are of mixed significance with the stables and long barn forming Curtlidge buildings. Remaining structures are of little interest.

The farmhouse, stable and barn have their origins in the C17 and early-C18, a period when all buildings that are reasonably intact albeit with wide ranging alteration in particular to the barn. Setting: the farmhouse with its associated agricultural buildings forms an evolved farmstead grouping which has survived since at least the C17. Context: changes and developments in the regional farming tradition are reflected in the alterations and evolution of the farmstead.



Fig. 5, Farmhouse



Fig. 6, Stables



Fig. 7, Internal animal stalls to stables



Fig. 9, External view of Barn facing courtyard



Fig. 8, Former hayloft to stables with truss



Fig. 10, Rear elevation of barn



Fig. 11, Ground floor of barn



Fig. 12, Internal view FF of Barn



Fig. 13, Later Shippen



Fig. 14, Later Shippen



Fig. 15, Rear view of Shippen and barn



Fig. 17 Open sided barn



Fig. 16, Internal view of Shippen



Fig 18 Garage



Fig. 19/20, Agricultural building



Heritage Impact Assessment

1. Scope and method of assessment

- 1.1 This impact assessment relies on the understanding of the property identified that is Barrack Fold Farm, a grade II listed building (heritage Asset). A brief understanding of the heritage asset and its significance has been discussed in the heritage statement. This impact assessment is a judgment on the proposal for refurbishment and alterations to the existing outbuildings only for residential use and to discuss the impact of the proposals upon the character of the heritage asset. It will provide a professional judgment on its acceptance and its contribution to the wider setting of the building.
- 1.2 In assessing the impact of a proposal which entails the impact on a heritage asset, this assessment draws on a number of key guiding documents where applicable, such as English Heritage Conservation Principles, 2008 and Historic England Guidance, Historic Environment good practice advice in planning Note 3, The Setting of Heritage Assets, 2017 where required. I have also considered the impact of the proposal upon the heritage asset by relating directly to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Bury Council.

1.3 In determining applications affecting Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, local authorities have to have regard for the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. Policies in the NPPF reinforce the 1990 Planning Act, but use slightly different words and emphasise balancing use, viability and conservation: 'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation'. The local authority should 'identify and assess the particular significance of heritage assets', and 'take account of available evidence and necessary expertise'.

1.4 This report provides an appropriate level of significance assessment for this case, when 'considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal. The NPPF advises that when considering the impact of a proposal 'great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be. More weight is therefore given to assets of national importance such as listed buildings, than to local heritage, and more weight should be given to features and elements of high significance than those of lower importance.

1.5 Proposals may enhance, have a neutral impact or cause harm

to a heritage asset. The level of harm may be slight, 'less than substantial harm' or substantial. The NPPF states that substantial harm to listed buildings (such as demolition or loss) should be exceptional, and it has to be very robustly justified. Where 'less than substantial' harm is likely to be caused, the harm has to be balanced against the public benefits. This level of harm can include removal or covering over of features.

2. Description of Proposed Development and its Impact (summary)

2.1 This report is to be read in conjunction with plans submitted and other supporting reports.

2.2 **Stables** – A change of use to residential together with limited external alterations. Internally the building will be refurbished to create residential units with a connection to the adjoining barn made. In addition, the GF animal stalls will be removed and new GF surface made. FF, the timber truss will be reused as a decorative fixture but affixed to internal gable end to allow for headroom. **Less than substantial impact modulated to low impact**

2.3 **Barn** – A change of use to residential. Other than a number of new openings in particular to the rear elevation there is no

original fabric impacted as a result of the works. The barn contains no internal fixtures or fittings of any significance.

Impact, Neutral/Benign.

- 2.4 **Shippen** – Change of use to residential, removal of animal stalls (to be reused elsewhere on the site, perhaps within the courtyard parking area to the Shippen) and proposed new single storey extension. The shippen itself is of low/medium significance and the proposed works have little impact on the building itself. The proposed extension extends the building slightly commensurate with its proposed use. However, the increase in size and the positioning of the extension, make little if any discernible impact upon the heritage asset. **Impact Neutral/Benign**

- 2.5 **Other Structures;** Dutch/open sided barn and agricultural buildings. These building have no significance whatsoever, therefore their change of use would be assessed by other aspects of planning policy. However, the impact of the CoU from a heritage planning view, the proposals would make little if any discernible impact. The buildings are present, and whilst the buildings would most likely be required to be rebuilt: Impact upon the character of the heritage asset would be **Neutral/Benign**

- 2.6 **Setting** –The farmstead is fairly isolated with an evolved courtyard farmstead and with open pastoral views from all points. The proposal for CoU to residential to existing buildings would not necessarily change the inherent character of the sites settings. There will be an impact of additional parking spaces, garden subdivision and fencing. However, the proposed site plan proposes a light touch approach with post and wire fencing, native hedging forming boundaries and parking spaces to be of semi permeable materials. Therefore, I do not believe the proposals would give rise to any undue harm or impact on the setting of the heritage asset. It is worth noting that Barrack Fold Farm, is no longer a working farm, therefore the CoU and associated works will not impact on the agricultural character of the site.

3. **Assessment of proposed development against Heritage Planning Policy Criteria; Nationally and Locally**

- 3.1 The heritage impact assessment as set out above has identified that overall, no harm will result in the proposed works to the listed building and that the works proposed will not adversely impact upon the appearance and character of the property.
- 3.2 Nationally and in accordance with the principles of the NPPF, this might be classified as either ‘substantial’ or ‘less than

substantial' harm. Although no definition is provided as to what constitutes 'substantial', in such circumstances the Planning Practice Guidance: 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment' states that "in general terms substantial harm is a high test so it may not arise in many cases".

3.3 The NPPF states that "Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum use".

3.4 The benefits offered by the proposed scheme area as follows:

- The proposal will enable the owners of this important building to rehabilitate, upgrade and generally modernise the building and provide the benefits that will accrue from the proposals to substantially upgrade the residential offer.
- The proposal will provide continued investment into this area whilst ensuring the intrinsic character of the buildings is maintained.
- The improvements to the building will improve its setting and character.

4. Local Planning Policy – Bury Council

4.1 Policy EN2/3 of the adopted Bury UDP outlines the policy principles and considerations in the determination of planning applications affecting heritage assets.

4.2 The proposal as submitted and to which this report relates, has outlined that it seeks to preserve the integrity of the listed buildings and their setting by adopting a proactive heritage led approach to refurbishment and development proposals. This will help to safeguard and thereby reinforce the architectural and historic merit of the listed building. The works proposed, whilst in part in sensitive areas, will not result in a significant dilution of design or introduce design deemed to be incongruous. The works will help create and lead to the long term sustainable occupation of the buildings providing for high quality residential dwellings. The proposals will meet the objectives of the Bury Council UDP.

5. Conclusions

5.1 This report has considered the heritage implications of works proposed to Barrack Fold Farm upon its identified significance. The current owners see the site as an opportunity to boost the potential of the site; retaining, refurbishing and improving the outbuilding ready for long term sustainable residential use.

- 5.2 The works proposed are heritage led, with a full commitment to a thorough understanding of the heritage asset and its context. The significance of the buildings have been assessed and design responses made based on a holistic approach to make the buildings more accessible, improve circulation and reinstate room proportions.
- 5.3 Government policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework requires that proposed changes to the historic environment are based on a clear understanding of significance of any heritage asset and their setting that are affected, providing information so that the likely impact of proposals can be assessed.
- 5.4 The heritage assessment provided in this report is carried out in accordance with the historic environment policies in the NPPF and local planning policy, and is intended to aid the assessment of the planning application. I have briefly outlined the historical development of the property, its character and appearance. I have outlined the scope of the works/interventions and commented on the likely impact upon the heritage assets and any mitigating factors.
- 5.5 The crucial test contained within the NPPF is whether the harm to heritage asset is outweighed by the benefits of the proposal. There are now strong positive social and economic

reasons to support such a scheme through improvements to the buildings which will fully implement the conversion of the buildings to residential use.

- 5.6 My conclusions have found that the proposed works will result in a **minor positive impact** to the heritage asset. The works are protecting those elements of significance and providing for a long term sustainable end use. They are providing ongoing architectural unity, safeguarding historic fabric and generally making an improvement to the property, its setting and providing appropriate interventions.
- 5.7 The proposals will I believe, make considerable improvements to the building whilst safeguarding, restoring and protecting elements of heritage merit. I believe that the proposals as set out will not present any detrimental impact or harm upon the heritage asset.

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Director

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